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PEACOCK'S  
MEMOIRS OF SHELLEY  
WITH  
SHELLEY'S LETTERS TO PEACOCK

EDITED BY  
H. F. B. BRETT-SMITH

LONDON  
HENRY FROWDE  
1909

< data data-bbox="302 437 670 480" data-label="Text">

OXFORD : HORACE HART  
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

## PREFACE

ALL Peacock's reminiscences of Shelley made their first appearance in the pages of *Fraser's Magazine*. Part I was the first article in the July number of 1858, and was printed as a review of the following volumes:—

*Shelley and his Writings.* By Charles S. Middleton.

London: Newby, 1856. [An error, repeated in Cole's edition, for 1858.]

*Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron.*

By E. J. Trelawny. London: Moxon, 1858.

*The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* By Thomas Jefferson Hogg. In Four Volumes. Vols. I and II. London: Moxon, 1858.

It is to the titles of these works that Peacock refers on page 4. Part II of the *Memoirs* appeared in the January number of 1860, after the publication of the *Shelley Memorials*; the *Supplementary Notice* was added in the March number of 1862; and the seventeen letters, with the introductory note on pp. 93-4, formed the first article in the March number of 1860.

Of these, Shelley's letters have been included in various collections, but the *Memoirs* have been reprinted only once, in the three volume edition of Peacock's works edited in 1875 by Sir Henry Cole. From the sheets of this edition the present text has been prepared, but every word has been collated with the original articles in *Fraser*, and their earliest form has been strictly preserved. Cole's editing was far from satisfactory; he frequently omitted or inserted words, and made other alterations; these errors have been corrected, and Peacock's original punctuation retained except when it is untenable. Occasionally, however, it has been necessary to follow the later version when the earlier is manifestly wrong; Cole, for example, tacitly corrects a mistake in the age of Brown the novelist, which was originally printed as twenty-nine instead of thirty-nine.

The most difficult question has been that of quotations. Peacock very rarely gave a reference (not always correct), and invariably quoted with peculiar inaccuracy. In the present edition, every citation of more than half a dozen words from an English, Greek or Latin author, except in the case of legal documents, has been traced or verified, and the reference supplied. Where Peacock merely altered the punctuation, the reference has been considered

sufficient; where he altered the text, the correct version is supplied in a footnote. In the case of quotations in French, Italian, Portuguese and Welsh, I have been content to reproduce the exact words of the *Fraser* text. In justice to Peacock, it must be admitted that many of his sins in reforming his quotations are due to a reluctance to soil his pen with the abominable English of Medwin and Hogg. For the verification of two references which the Bodleian Library did not afford, and the generous sacrifice of time far more valuable than my own, I have to thank Mr. Percy Simpson.

In regard to the letters, my gratitude is due to Mr. H. Buxton Forman, who kindly permitted the text of his monumental edition of Shelley's Prose Works to be used for purposes of revision and amplification. From his high authority I have rarely departed, and never, except in a point of typography or the correction of an obvious misprint, without due acknowledgement. To his edition I am indebted also for a few identifications, and for one essential note, all of which are marked by the initials H. B. F. Notes added by Mary Shelley are subscribed M. S., and I have occasionally given *variae lectiones* from the text of her edition and those of Garnett and Rhys. It was found necessary to distinguish Peacock's

own notes throughout the volume by his initials ; note 3 on page 133 has unluckily escaped this process. For all other unsigned notes and references the editor is alone responsible.

The text of the letters is now reproduced as fully as possible : Peacock, editing them in 1860, omitted besides the markedly anti-Christian passages all the more pointed references to Mr. Gisborne, and the names of some persons—Barry Cornwall, for example—who are ungently used. To preserve his *lacunae* would have been needless and annoying, but it is necessary to call attention to his original scrupulosity, and to the note on pp. 201-2.

Letters 1 and 3—those which Middleton pirated—are particularly imperfect. From the sale catalogue of Peacock's library, however, it is possible to supply one interesting passage selected from the third letter by an astute auctioneer :

Lord Byron is an exceedingly interesting person, and as such is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds ?

The same source yields an explanation of the opening of the twenty-seventh letter, which enclosed 'a letter from a creditor pressing for settlement or threatening outlawry', and an addition to the Gisborne passages of the twenty-eighth :

Cobbett persuaded you, you persuaded me, and I have persuaded the Gisbornes that the British funds are very insecure. They come to England accordingly to sell out their property.

Finally, it ought perhaps to be mentioned that Professor Dowden, in his *Life of Shelley*, observes that 'the dates of Shelley's letter from Ferrara, November 8 and 9 [1818], must be incorrect. The journal shows that the true dates are November 6 and 7.' But for this explanation, a comparison of the heading of this letter with that of the next—*Bologna, Nov. 9th*—would certainly have been liable to breed suspicion.

H. F. B. B-S.



## INTRODUCTION

AMONG the early accounts of Shelley, the *Memoirs* of Thomas Love Peacock hold an important but isolated position, which resembles in many points that of Matthew Arnold's *Essay* among the later lives. The likeness, indeed, is somewhat marked. Each piece made its first appearance as a review, by a writer of acute observation and comparatively impartial judgement, of a more pretentious and more biased piece of Shelley biography; and each review has become a classic on this very limited subject. Their authority, indeed, differs in its essence. Peacock combines with the sympathy and comprehension of a personal friend of Shelley, the impartiality of a man, never subject to enthusiasms, who looks back on his companion's lifetime with the added disinterestedness of six and thirty years; while the criticism of Arnold, with equal clarity of thought, is strong in the breadth of view and the complete candour which could only come with a later and quite unprejudiced generation. Yet in the biography of Shelley—an unsavoury and debatable tract, from which that reader is fortunate who escapes no more a partisan than he entered in—the short critical papers of Peacock and Arnold are alike in their value as purges for the petty disingenuousness of apologists, who have not yet perceived that Shelley's vindication, as Peacock claimed, is best permitted

to rest on the grounds on which it was placed by himself.

When biography becomes controversial, it should hibernate for a century; Shelley's biography, cradled in a limbo of conflicting witness, has never had a fair chance. The first fault lay with the reviewers of his own day, who regarded him, very naturally, as 'a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect'. They were faced with the opinions of his early poems, and the facts of his early life; and it was inevitable that they should attack him with the utmost bitterness of a moral and uncensored press. From this assault the writers on Shelley's life have never recovered; they either compile or demolish needless defences, and the chaos is made worse by the untrustworthy nature of many of the best qualified accounts. Medwin's *Life* is highly inaccurate. That of Hogg is unrivalled for the Oxford period, but is somewhat discredited in its later development, both by the writer's peculiar relations with Shelley and his first wife, and by his tendency to indulge in lurid detail and caustic satire. Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials* were written to counteract the influence of Hogg; and Trelawny, who gives a pleasing and vigorous picture of the last months of Shelley's life, reminds us by frequent discrepancies of Lord Byron's statement that even to save his life he could not tell the truth. The value of all these books lies chiefly in their material: method, disinterestedness, and just perspective could only come with the professional,

not the amateur historian. Yet it is not too much to say that the latter qualities are more conspicuous in the *Memoirs* of Peacock, which were written, be it remembered, as a critical review, than in any of the accounts of contemporaries; and during the period between Shelley's residence at Bracknell and his final departure from England, Peacock had unequalled opportunities of observation. Nor is his authority lessened by the fact that he long refused to write on Shelley's life; most lovers of the poet will sympathize with such reluctance; and his desire that Shelley, 'like his own Skylark, had been left unseen in his congenial region, and that he had been only heard in the splendour of his song,' is echoed with a more poignant regret in the pages of Arnold's *Essay*.

Thomas Love Peacock, the son of a London merchant, was born towards the end of 1785, and lost his father before he was four years old. His mother settled at Chertsey, and the boy was educated at a private school in Englefield Green. A short experience as a city clerk at fourteen, and an equally short one at twenty-three as under-secretary to Sir Home Popham on board a man-of-war, seem to have been little to his liking, and certainly did not interrupt the course of classical study which he pursued after leaving school. In 1804 and 1806 he published small collections of verses, and in 1810 appeared his first venture of importance, *The Genius of the Thames*. He met Shelley for the first time two years later.

Peacock, at all times an attractive figure, must have made a considerable impression on the younger poet, now only in his twentieth year. He was seven years older,

a fine, tall, handsome man, with a profusion of bright brown hair, eyes of fine dark blue, massive brow, and regular features, a Roman nose, a handsome mouth which, when he laughed, as I well remember, turned up at the corners, and a complexion, fair as a girl's; his hair was peculiar in its wild luxuriant growth, it seemed to grow all from the top of his head, had no parting, but hung about in thick locks with a rich wave all through it.

So says his grand-daughter, Edith Nicolls, describing a portrait taken about 1810.

In mind, he was little less distinguished; he possessed already the keenness of intellect, the wit, and the half-contemptuous, half-amused insight into the springs of human conduct, which mark his subsequent novels. Moreover, he had a genuine knowledge and love of the classics, and in ancient literature Shelley found him a guide of greater learning and no less devotion. And while their pursuits were harmonious, their natures and views were dissimilar enough for mutual interest, for Peacock was to Shelley that curious creature, a man of the world, and Shelley to Peacock, that *rara avis*, a genius. Yet Peacock was no worldling, except in a combination of clear-headedness, humour, and genial good-fellowship; his affections were deep, if unobtrusive, and his friendships were permanent. In one respect,

indeed, he was most unworldly; a distaste for uncongenial work had kept him out of any regular profession, and his means were consequently restricted.

It was at Nant Gwillt, in Radnorshire, in the spring of 1812, that Shelley and Harriet made his acquaintance. But their movements about this time were rapid and uncertain; they passed successively from Nant Gwillt to Lynmouth, Tanyrallt, Dublin and Killarney; and although they returned to London in May, 1813, they saw little of their new friend till he visited them, some months later, in their temporary house at Bracknell.

Shelley had gone there in order to be near the de Boinvilles, who were the centre of a little literary clique of which Peacock gives an amusing account. Hogg, who had also been there, and had gone away in disgust, is much more brutal.

‘I generally found there,’ he says, ‘two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners or medical students, all of low origin and vulgar and offensive manners. They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and *Political Justice*, acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts of Petrarchs, Werthers, St. Leons, and Fleetwoods.’

Peacock was more tolerant; and though he joined Harriet in laughing at their misdirected energies, he was evidently a congenial companion, for in October he occupied a seat in the Shelleys’ carriage on their

second journey to Edinburgh. Unfortunately he says little of this visit, or some light might be thrown on the unsupported statement of the 'informant, exceedingly unlikely to be mistaken', who told Rossetti that when Shelley came of age, his 'first act was to marry Harriet over again in an Episcopal Chapel in Edinburgh'. Had this been so, Peacock would hardly have ignored a piece of evidence which lent such strong support to his argument on the separation.

The Shelleys returned to London at the end of 1813, and there, in March of the following year, they were formally remarried. Peacock speaks of this ceremony as witness to the absence of any estrangement, but the claim is not conclusive, for Shelley's object was merely to place beyond all doubt the legitimacy of his expected heir, and in another four months he had deserted Harriet.

This incident, the most painful in Shelley's life, demands detailed notice both from the space devoted to it in the *Memoirs*, and because it has stumbled so many of Shelley's biographers. Rossetti and Symonds were hampered by the want of documents which were not made public until the appearance, in 1886, of Professor Dowden's weighty *Life*; and Professor Dowden's unconscious bias in Shelley's favour has grievously obscured his account of the separation. The main contention of Peacock—that it did not take place by mutual consent—stands confirmed, in spite of Garnett's attack; but in various minor matters his account requires correction. That there

was 'no shadow of a thought of separation' before Shelley met Mary Godwin is likely enough, but that there was 'no estrangement' is not so probable: Harriet's intellectual development had not kept pace with her husband's, and his letter to Hogg (March 16, 1814) shows clearly enough that even before the meeting with Mary, the attractions of Mrs. de Boinville's daughter Cornelia had seriously engaged his highly susceptible heart. Its ultimate conquest by some one other than Harriet was humanly certain.

Peacock's reply, in his *Supplementary Notice*, to Garnett's criticism in *Macmillan's Magazine*, provoked a rejoinder in the same year. In this article, printed at the end of his *Relics of Shelley*, and distinguished by peculiar acrimony and lack of taste, Garnett showed the probability of an earlier estrangement, and the reason of the second marriage, and proved Peacock to have misquoted Harriet's letter of July 7 (p. 86), and also the interview with Southey (p. 50). In the latter case Shelley is as likely to have been at fault as Peacock, who admits his uncertainty of the facts; and the letter must have been quoted from memory or hearsay. But Garnett still relied on the unpublished documents for his main point, that the separation was 'an amicable agreement effected in virtue of a mutual understanding', and their publication has shown that Peacock was right.

The flaws in Professor Dowden's treatment of the question have been brilliantly exposed in Matthew

Arnold's *Essay*. Both Professor Dowden and Dr. Garnett have hinted that Shelley was unlikely to make Peacock his confidant over the separation, and this is highly probable. Shelley could always persuade himself, quite genuinely, of anything which he wished to believe; he had probably persuaded himself that Harriet no longer loved him; and instinct would warn him not to expose the desired illusion to the searchlight of Peacock's logic, which had been proved too strong for so many former hallucinations. He was evidently much annoyed by Peacock's attitude of tacit disapproval, and his irritation is clearly shown by a sentence in the almost ludicrously tactless letter to Harriet from Troyes:

I have written to Peacock to superintend money affairs; he is expensive, inconsiderate, and cold, but surely not utterly perfidious and unfriendly and unmindful of our kindness to him; besides, interest will secure his attention to these things.

The last sentence probably refers to the annual sum of £100 which Shelley allowed Peacock for some time prior to his India House appointment.

Shelley left London for Switzerland, with Mary Godwin and Claire Claremont, on July 28, 1814, and did not return until the following September. By a clerical error, Peacock mentions the letters he received during the second tour in Switzerland, two years later, as belonging to this period: if any reached him in 1814, all trace of them is now lost. After

their return Shelley and Mary took rooms in London for the winter, and Peacock several times gave the poet a night's lodging, lest he should be arrested for debt at his own door. But early in the following year the death of Sir Bysshe Shelley placed his grandson's affairs on a better footing ; a house was taken at Bishopgate, and in the summer Peacock, who had been a frequent visitor there, accompanied the Shelleys and Charles Clairmont on a river expedition up the Thames.

To this holiday belongs one of the many amusing incidents of the *Memoirs*. Shelley had published the treatise, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, in 1813, but the practice of his vegetarian principles brought frequent trouble, and on their river trip Peacock's simple prescription — 'Three mutton chops, well peppered' — was immediately successful. 'While he was living from inn to inn,' says an earlier passage, 'he was obliged to live, as he said, "on what he could get"; that is to say, like other people. When he got well under this process he gave all the credit to locomotion, and held himself to have thus benefited, not in consequence of his change of regimen, but in spite of it.' There is curious confirmation of this statement in a letter to Hogg written in September, 1815, 'on my return from a water excursion on the Thames,' in which Shelley remarks that 'the exercise and dissipation of mind attached to such an expedition have produced so favourable an effect on my health, that my habitual dejection and irritability have

almost deserted me.' Not a word here of the change of diet from tea and bread and butter to a liberal allowance of mutton !

From this time until Shelley's final departure from England, his intercourse with Peacock was broken only by the second Swiss tour of 1816, and both *Alastor* and the *Revolt of Islam* had the advantage of his friend's criticism.

In 1819, twelve months after the Shelleys went to Italy, Peacock became a clerk in the service of the East India Company, and the next twenty years changed the idle *littérateur* into a busy and able official. But before this he had published his third novel, *Nightmare Abbey*, which takes rank, in its bearing on Shelley, with the *Memoirs* and the *Four Ages of Poetry*. The character of Scythrop, in this novel, is a lively portrait of the poet as he was when Peacock first met him, and their adventures in love have a distinct resemblance. Scythrop's early and transient affection for his cousin Emily is a repetition of Shelley's for his cousin Harriet Grove ; and his hesitation between the two heroines, Marionetta and Stella, recalls the doubtful supremacy of Harriet Shelley and Mary Godwin. The similarity of situation required careful handling, but by making his hero lose both the ladies, Peacock secured the tale from any infringement of good taste : and his treatment of Scythrop is delightful. Scythrop is a brilliant realization of the undeveloped Shelley of 1812 : he devours tragedies and German romances, is troubled

with the ‘*passion for reforming the world*’ which his original never lost, and publishes a treatise entitled *Philosophical Gas ; or, a Project for a General Illumination of the Human Mind*. ‘He slept with Horrid Mysteries under his pillow, and dreamed of venerable eleutherarchs and ghastly confederates holding midnight conventions in subterranean caves.’ And his soliloquies echo the views of ‘the sublime Kant, who delivers his oracles in language which none but the initiated can comprehend’.

Shelley’s instant and joyful recognition of the identity of Scythrop, and his keen appreciation of a novel which presented him in a somewhat ludicrous light, have usually been regarded with surprise. Probably he was flattered by the implied compliment ; in any case he must have recognized the good feeling of the picture and the brilliance of its setting ; but the real secret of his pleasure lay, no doubt, in the retrospective aspect of *Nightmare Abbey*—all the events shown there, and most of the foibles displayed, were things of the past, and he could afford to join Peacock in the laugh against his old self. Perhaps his friend’s comprehension of the nature of Shelley’s early heroics appears as well as anywhere at the close of the novel, where Scythrop, seated over a pistol and a pint of port, and faced with an unfortunate decision to take his own life at twenty-five minutes past seven, uses the pistol for the more reasonable purpose of persuading his butler *vi et armis* that the clock is fast. Yet Peacock could hardly have seen the letter to Hogg, written

seven years earlier, in which Shelley naïvely wrote : 'Is suicide wrong ? I slept with a loaded pistol and some poison last night, but did not die.'

Only one of Peacock's remaining prose works has much interest in regard to Shelley, although there are distinct traces of his opinions to be found in both the earlier novels, *Headlong Hall* and *Melincourt*. This is the essay entitled *The Four Ages of Poetry*, published by Ollier in 1820 : a humorous and very characteristic attack, to which Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* was a direct reply. The utter difference in the point of view, and the omission by John Hunt of the polemic passages of the *Defence*, have altogether obscured its controversial origin : in fact, few processes bring out the essential dissimilarity between the minds of the two friends so clearly as a comparison of these essays. Peacock, who loved poetry as well as any man, could no more help laughing at some of its aspects than he could help laughing at some of Shelley's ; he traces its history from Orpheus and Amphion, 'building cities with a song, and leading brutes with a symphony ; which are only metaphors for the faculty of leading multitudes by the nose,' down to the dark ages, 'in which the light of the Gospel began to spread over Europe, and in which, by a mysterious and inscrutable dispensation, the darkness thickened with the progress of the light.' As Shelley said in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* :

His fine wit  
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it.

But his real quarrel is with the moderns, and especially the Lake Poets in their mountain retirement, ‘passing the whole day in the innocent and amiable occupation of going up and down hill, receiving poetical impressions, and communicating them in immortal verse to admiring generations.’

Shelley had neither the wish nor the power to tackle his opponent on his own ground, but his incomplete *Defence* is a serious effort to obtain light, and all Peacock’s wit pales before the glow of the great definition ‘A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth’. Shelley believed in the future, and blundered after better things: Peacock in the past, and saw the weak points of reformers: the outlook of the two essays is characteristic of the men.

Yet the clear comprehension of Shelley’s foibles never biased the author of the *Memoirs*; he painted the man as he was, and did not strive after telling points with Hogg’s satiric licence. ‘Nothing,’ said Robert Buchanan, who knew him in his old age, ‘can be more gentle, more guarded, than Peacock’s printed account of Shelley. His private conversation on the subject was, of course, very different. Two subjects he did not refer to in his articles may safely be mentioned now—Shelley’s violent fits of passion, and the difficulty Peacock found in keeping on friendly terms with Mary Godwin.’ There is no hint of either here, although the instance of petulance which Buchanan gives would have made a good story in the manner of Hogg.

On the very difficult question of Shelley's hallucinations—'the degree in which his imagination coloured events'—the *Memoirs* are peculiarly rich. They include the imaginary visit in his childhood, the Eton incident, the madhouse scare, the affray at Tanyrallt, the dread of elephantiasis, Williams's warning, and the cloaked man at Florence. The list might be doubled from other sources; the Keswick robbery and Medwin's veiled lady occur at once, with the mysterious cry of 'Cenci, Cenci', which thrilled the poet in the streets of Rome—and proved to be the request for 'old rags'! Adventures of this kind, as Symonds observed, blend fact and fancy in a now inextricable tangle, but there is no better explanation of them than that which Peacock suggests: that on some basis—usually the idea that his father and uncle had designs on his liberty—'his imagination built a fabric of romance, and when he presented it as substantive fact, and it was found to contain more or less of inconsistency, he felt his self-esteem interested in maintaining it by accumulated circumstances, which severally vanished under the touch of investigation.' The remarkable blend of fact and fiction in Shelley's second letter to Godwin shows that this habit of romance must have been very deeply rooted.

The great value of the *Memoirs* lies in their standpoint: they attain the just blend of sympathy and discernment which the nature of their subject makes so difficult. When Shelley settled himself to the poetical contemplation of life, he found it a thing

Of error, ignorance, and strife,  
Where nothing is, but all things seem,  
And we the shadows of the dream,

and this aspect of unreality appealed to him very strongly: he even found that

Death is the veil which those who live call life:  
They sleep, and it is lifted.

But in his actual passage through the world, the smugness of everyday existence oppressed him with all the pompous absurdity of a well-regulated public meeting; and like all highly-strung persons, he felt an irresistible desire to shriek—to put the dull orator, Custom, into a false gallop. This might be done either willingly or accidentally; by hooting, or hysterics. Sometimes he hooted: flicked bread-pellets into the faces of the Sir Oracles who passed him in the street, or startled staid old ladies in public vehicles with the suggestion:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings!

—‘not eccentricity so much as painful courtesy’, wrote de Quincey, who did not know the man. Sometimes he became hysterical, and the reviewers received a shock. But always he needed an understanding observer more than most objects of criticism; and it is intelligent sympathy, neither idealizing nor vilifying, in which Peacock’s *Memoirs* excel.

Probably few modern readers will agree with John Addington Symonds in the opinion that Shelley's Italian letters to Peacock, 'taken altogether, are the most perfect specimens of descriptive prose in the English language.' The writer's brain is too often, as he admits, 'like a portfolio of an architect, or a print-shop, or a commonplace-book,' and the poetry of his continual word-painting occasionally cloys. 'The tourists tell you all about these things,' he says, 'and I am afraid of stumbling on their language when I enumerate what is so well known.' There was little need for the apprehension, though we see that Shelley could be tourist enough at times, and could misquote *Lycidas* and hack pieces off dungeon doors with the worst. But the magnificence and variety of the ancient and modern art of Rome oppressed him; he laboured to convey his sensations, and we can see the effort in the presence of one small but significant phrase—the 'as it were' of his descriptions.

There is nothing of the tourist, however, in his views on art; without pretending to taste, he had his own opinions and the courage of them. Occasionally there is an excusable blunder—he thought, for example, that the painted dome of Milan Cathedral was carved in marble fretwork. But he disliked Michael Angelo, and had the rare courage to say so. And in general, his instinct for painting is less true

than for sculpture ; but he is at his best under the open sky, in the Baths of Caracalla, or meditating on Greek life among the ruins of Pompeii. This is not to say that he did not appreciate painting, but he had a standard of his own for it, as he had for music and the drama, and in neither art was it a normal one. Though in the case of the stage, his failure to enjoy comedy must have been due not only to his hatred of any injustice, but to that inability to perceive the essential humour of incongruity which allowed him to write 'Single sheet, by God !' on the cover of a letter to Miss Hitchener, by way of 'a strong, though vulgar appeal to the feelings of the postmaster'.

Michael Angelo is not the only sufferer in the letters. It is startling, after reading Peacock's statement that Shelley devotedly admired Wordsworth and Coleridge, to come upon the exclamation : 'What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth !' But it is not the poet, but the political pervert, who suffers this denunciation : the *Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmorland* had just been published, and Shelley's boundless indignation showed itself with little less strength in his sonnet to Wordsworth, and in *Peter Bell the Third*. Yet although he admired Wordsworth as a poet, his reference to the forest pool as 'sixteen feet long and ten feet wide, to venture an unrythmical paraphrase', shows that he was no more blind than Peacock to the dangers of the extreme simplicity of *The Thorn*.

Finally, these letters yield much information to the student of Shelley's poetry. Even among the most subjective English poets it may be doubted whether there are any, save Wordsworth, whose verse so habitually reflects their daily life—of which letters are the record. And both the manner and the matter of Shelley's poetry find representation here. For the former, there are no better instances than two passages in the letter of March 23, 1819—the period of the second act of the *Prometheus*. Speaking of the arch of Constantine, he describes the supporters of the keystones: 'two winged figures of Victory, whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed': and later 'their lips are parted: a delicate mode of indicating the fervour of their desire to arrive at the destined resting-place, and to express the eager respiration of their speed'. The three main ideas of these sentences all find a place within five lines of the *Prometheus* (II. iv. 135-9):

Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink  
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,  
As if the thing they loved fled on before,  
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright  
locks  
Stream like a comet's flashing hair.

It is a fine example of the truth of Browning's admirable remark, that in Shelley's letters 'the musician speaks on the note he sings with; there is no change in the scale, as he diminishes the volume into familiar intercourse': and that 'we find even

his carnal speech to agree faithfully, at faintest as at strongest, with the tone and rhythm of his most oracular utterances'.

And for an instance of a sketch attempted before the subject is finally chosen to grace a poem, there is the picture of the forest pool given with so much detail in the ninth letter, with its water 'as transparent as the air, so that the stones and sand at the bottom seem, as it were, trembling in the light of noonday'. Surely this pool must have been in the mind of Shelley—who had as keen a zest for the brilliance of unbroken light as Milton had for the play of light and shade—when he wrote the lines in the *Prometheus* (IV. 503):

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,  
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,  
Out of the stream of sound,

and surely there is no doubt that just as the paper boats which Shelley and Peacock launched, and the wherries in which they skimmed the Thames, sail for ever as magic barques on the rivers of *Alastor* and *Ahrimanes*, so the memory of this pool which the poet loved lives here for a brief moment on Panthea's lips.

H. F. B. BRETT-SMITH.

OXFORD,

September, 1909.



# MEMOIRS OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

‘ Rousseau, ne recevant aucun auteur, remercie Madame—  
de ses bontés, et la prie de ne plus venir chez lui.’

ROUSSEAU had a great aversion to visitors of all classes, but especially to literary visitors, feeling sure that they would print something about him. A lady who had long persisted in calling on him, one day published a *brochure*, and sent him a copy. He rejoiced in the opportunity which brought her under his rule of exclusion, and terminated their intercourse by the above *billet-doux*.

Rousseau’s rule bids fair to become general with all who wish to keep in the *secretum iter et fallentis semita vitæ*, and not to become materials for general gossip. For not only is a departed author of any note considered a fair subject to be dissected at the tea-table of the reading public, but all his friends and connexions, however quiet and retiring and unobtrusive may have been the general tenor of their lives, must be served up with him. It is the old village scandal on a larger scale; and as in these days of universal locomotion people know nothing of their neighbours, they prefer tittle-tattle about notoriety to the retailing of whispers about the Jenkinses and Tomkinsses of the vicinity.

This appetite for gossip about notoriety being once created in the ‘reading public’, there will be always found persons to minister to it; and among the volunteers of this service, those who are best informed and who most valued the departed will probably not

be the foremost. Then come biographies abounding with errors ; and then, as matter of defence perhaps, comes on the part of friends a tardy and more authentic narrative. This is at best, as Mr. Hogg describes it, a 'difficult and delicate task'. But it is always a matter of choice and discretion. No man is bound to write the life of another. No man who does so is bound to tell the public all he knows. On the contrary, he is bound to keep to himself whatever may injure the interests or hurt the feelings of the living, especially when the latter have in no way injured or calumniated the dead, and are not necessarily brought before the tribunal of public opinion in the character of either plaintiffs or defendants. Neither if there be in the life of the subject of the biography any event which he himself would willingly have blotted from the tablet of his own memory, can it possibly be the duty of a survivor to drag it into daylight. If such an event be the cardinal point of a life ; if to conceal it or to misrepresent it would be to render the whole narrative incomplete, incoherent, unsatisfactory alike to the honour of the dead and the feelings of the living ; then, as there is no moral compulsion to speak of the matter at all, it is better to let the whole story slumber in silence.

Having lived some years in very familiar intimacy with the subject of these memoirs ; having had as good opportunities as any, and better than most persons now living, to observe and appreciate his great genius, extensive acquirements, cordial friendships, disinterested devotion to the well-being of the few with whom he lived in domestic intercourse, and ardent endeavours by private charity and public advocacy to ameliorate the condition of the many who pass their days in unremunerating toil ; having been named his executor conjointly with Lord Byron,

whose death, occurring before that of Shelley's father, when the son's will came into effect, left me alone in that capacity; having lived after his death in the same cordial intimacy with his widow, her family, and one or two at least of his surviving friends, I have been considered to have some peculiar advantages for writing his life, and have often been requested to do so; but for the reasons above given I have always refused.

Wordsworth says to the Cuckoo:—

O blithe new-comer! I have heard,  
I hear thee, and rejoice.  
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,  
Or but a wandering Voice?

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!  
Even yet thou art to me  
No bird, but an invisible thing,  
A voice, a mystery.<sup>1</sup>

Shelley was fond of repeating these verses, and perhaps they were not forgotten in his poem 'To a Skylark':—

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart,  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight:  
Like a star of heaven,  
In the broad daylight,  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Now, I could have wished that, like Wordsworth's Cuckoo, he had been allowed to remain a voice and

<sup>1</sup> Stanzas 1 and 4 of the earlier (1804) poem 'To the Cuckoo'.

a mystery : that, like his own *Skylark*, he had been left unseen in his congenial region,

Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call earth,<sup>1</sup>

and that he had been only heard in the splendour of his song. But since it is not to be so, since so much has been, and so much more will probably be, written about him, the motives which deterred me from originating a substantive work on the subject, do not restrict me from commenting on what has been published by others, and from correcting errors, if such should appear to me to occur, in the narratives which I may pass under review.

I have placed the works at the head of this article in the order in which they were published. I have no acquaintance with Mr. Middleton. Mr. Trelawny and Mr. Hogg I may call my friends.

Mr. Middleton's work is chiefly a compilation from previous publications, with some very little original matter, curiously obtained.

Mr. Trelawny's work relates only to the later days of Mr. Shelley's life in Italy.

Mr. Hogg's work is the result of his own personal knowledge, and of some inedited letters and other documents, either addressed to himself or placed at his disposal by Sir Percy Shelley and his lady. It is to consist of four volumes, of which the two just published bring down the narrative to the period immediately preceding Shelley's separation from his first wife. At that point I shall terminate this first part of my proposed review.

I shall not anticipate opinions, but shall go over all that is important in the story as briefly as I can,

<sup>1</sup> Milton, *Comus*, ll. 5, 6.

interspersing such observations as may suggest themselves in its progress.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at his father's seat, Field Place, in Sussex, on the 4th of August 1792. His grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, was then living, and his father, Timothy Shelley, Esquire, was then or subsequently a Member of Parliament. The family was of great antiquity; but Percy conferred more honour on it than he derived from it.

He had four sisters and a brother, the youngest of the family, and the days of his childhood appear to have passed affectionately in his domestic society.

To the first ten years of his life we have no direct testimony but that of his sister Hellen, in a series of letters to Lady Shelley, published in the beginning of Mr. Hogg's work. In the first of these she says:—

A child who at six years old was sent daily to learn Latin at a clergyman's house, and as soon as it was expedient removed to Dr. Greenland's, from thence to Eton, and subsequently to college, could scarcely have been the *uneducated* son that some writers would endeavour to persuade those who read their books to believe he ought to have been, if his parents despised education.<sup>1</sup> *finds*

Miss Hellen gives an illustration of Shelley's boyish traits of imagination:—

On one occasion he gave the most minute details of a visit he had paid to some ladies with whom he was acquainted at our village. He described their reception of him, their occupations, and the wandering in their pretty garden, where there was a well-remembered filbert-walk and an undulating turf-bank, the delight of our morning visit. There must have been something peculiar in this little event; for I have often heard it

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 6.

mentioned as a singular fact, and it was ascertained almost immediately, that the boy had never been to the house. It was not considered as a falsehood to be punished; but I imagine his conduct altogether must have been so little understood and unlike that of the generality of children, that these tales were left unnoticed.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hogg says at a later date:—

He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare naked realities of actual life; not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and unresisting victim, of his irresistible imagination.

Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances. The relation given on the morrow would be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday.<sup>1</sup>

Several instances will be given of the habit, thus early developed in Shelley, of narrating, as real, events which had never occurred; and his friends and relations have thought it necessary to give prominence to this habit as a characteristic of his strong imaginativeness predominating over reality. Coleridge has written much and learnedly on this subject of ideas with the force of sensations, of which he found many examples in himself.

At the age of ten, Shelley was sent to Sion House Academy, near Brentford. ‘Our master,’ says his schoolfellow, Captain Medwin, ‘a Scotch Doctor of

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 68.

Law, and a divine, was a choleric man, of a sanguinary complexion, in a green old age, not wanting in good qualities, but very capricious in his temper, which, good or bad, was influenced by the daily occurrences of a domestic life not the most harmonious, and of which his face was the barometer and his hand the index.' This worthy was in the habit of cracking unbecoming jokes, at which most of the boys laughed; but Shelley, who could not endure this sort of pleasantry, received them with signs of aversion. A day or two after one of these exhibitions, when Shelley's manifestation of dislike to the matter had attracted the preceptor's notice, Shelley had a theme set him for two Latin lines on the subject of *Tempestas*.

He came to me (says Medwin) to assist him in the task. I had a cribbing book, of which I made great use, Ovid's *Tristibus*. I knew that the only work of Ovid with which the Doctor was acquainted was the *Metamorphoses*, and by what I thought good luck, I happened to stumble on two lines exactly applicable to the purpose. The hexameter I forgot, but the pentameter ran thus:

    Jam, jam tacturos sidera celsa putes.<sup>1</sup>

So far the story is not very classically told. The title of the book should have been given as *Tristia*, or *De Tristibus*; and the reading is *tacturas*, not

<sup>1</sup> Peacock has altered and contracted this quotation, to the benefit, certainly, of Medwin's grammar. The second and third sentences should run :

    I had got a cribbing book, and of which I made great use—Ovid's *Tristibus*. I knew that the only work of Ovid with which the Doctor was acquainted was the *Metamorphoses*, the only one, indeed, read in that and other seminaries of learning, and by what I thought great good luck, happened to stumble on two lines exactly applicable to the purpose.

    Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, p. 24.

*tacturos*; *summa*, not *celsa*: the latter term is inapplicable to the stars. The distich is this:

Me miserum! quanti montes volvuntur aquarum!  
Jam, jam tacturas sidera summa putes.<sup>1</sup>

Something was probably substituted for *Me miserum!* But be this as it may, Shelley was grievously beaten for what the schoolmaster thought bad Latin.<sup>2</sup> The Doctor's judgement was of a piece with that of the Edinburgh Reviewers, when taking a line of Pindar, which Payne Knight had borrowed in a Greek translation of a passage in Gray's Bard, to have been Payne Knight's own, they pronounced it to be nonsense.<sup>3</sup>

The name of the Brentford Doctor according to Miss Hellen Shelley was Greenland, and according to Mr. Hogg it was Greenlaw. Captain Medwin does not mention the name, but says, 'So much did we mutually hate Sion House, that we never alluded to it in after-life.' Mr. Hogg says, 'In walking with Shelley to Bishopsgate<sup>4</sup> from London, he pointed out to me more than once a gloomy brick house as being this school. He spoke of the master, Doctor

<sup>1</sup> *Tristium Lib. i. Eleg. ii. 19, 20.*

<sup>2</sup> Not for the erroneous use of *celsa*, but for the true Ovidian Latin, which the Doctor held to be bad. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> Θερμὸς δὲ τέγγαν δάκρυα στροναχαῖς. This line, which a synod of North British critics has peremptorily pronounced to be nonsense, is taken from the tenth Nemean of Pindar, v. 141; and until they passed sentence upon it in No. xiv. of the *Edinburgh Review*, was universally thought to express with peculiar force and delicacy the mixture of indignation and tenderness so appropriate to the grief of the hero of the modern as well as of the ancient ode.—*Principles of Taste*, part ii. c. 2.

I imagine there are many verses in the best classical poets which, if presented as original, would not pass muster with either teachers or critics. [T. L. P.]

<sup>4</sup> More properly Bishopgate, without the s: the entrance to Windsor Park from Englefield Green. Shelley had a furnished house, in 1815-16, very near to this park gate. [T. L. P.]

Greenlaw, not without respect, saying, "he was a hard-headed Scotchman, and a man of rather liberal opinions."<sup>1</sup> Of this period of his life he never gave me an account, nor have I heard or read any details which appeared to bear the impress of truth. Between these two accounts the Doctor and his character seem reduced to a myth. I myself know nothing of the matter. I do not remember Shelley ever mentioning the Doctor to me. But we shall find as we proceed, that whenever there are two evidences to one transaction, many of the recorded events of Shelley's life will resolve themselves into the same mythical character.

At the best, Sion House Academy must have been a bad beginning of scholastic education for a sensitive and imaginative boy.

After leaving this academy, he was sent, in his fifteenth year, to Eton. The head master was Doctor Keate, a less mythical personage than the Brentford Orbilius, but a variety of the same genus. Mr. Hogg says :—

Dr. Keate was a short, short-necked, short-legged, man—thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog ; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching : his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth, were exactly like that comely and engaging animal, and so were his short crooked legs. It was said in the school that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking after the long mild Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and under whom Keate had been master of the lower

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 22. In *Fraser's Magazine* the quotation is wrongly made to include the next sentence.

school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess. It is reported that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that on the whole he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was particularly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley.<sup>1</sup>

But Shelley suffered even more from his school-fellows than he did from his master. It had been so at Brentford, and it was still more so at Eton, from the more organized system of fagging, to which no ill-usage would induce him to submit. But among his equals in age he had several attached friends, and one of these, in a letter dated February 27th, 1857, gives the following reminiscences of their Eton days:— (Hogg i. 43.)

MY DEAR MADAM,—Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, 'when thought is speech and speech is truth,' when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings, and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the park at Windsor, the Terrace; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairyland, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his 'Elegy', of which he was very fond.

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 45.

I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindness and affectionate ways. He was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away, to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye when he was dwelling on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence to watch and cherish and direct all his noble aspirations and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing but what was base, and false, and low. He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. What I have here set down will be of little use to you, but will please you as a sincere and truthful and humble tribute to one whose good name was sadly whispered away. Shelley said to me when leaving Oxford under a cloud, 'Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me !' I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814,<sup>1</sup> when he was glad to introduce me to his wife. I think he said he was just come from Ireland. You have done quite right in applying to me direct, and I am only sorry that I have no anecdotes or letters of that period to furnish.

I am, yours truly,  
WALTER S. HALLIDAY.

This is the only direct testimony to Shelley's Eton life from one who knew him there. It contains two

<sup>1</sup> This letter, as quoted by Hogg, contains the words 'in London,' at this point.

instances of how little value can be attached to any other than such direct testimony. That at that time he never went out in a boat on the river I believe to be strictly true: nevertheless Captain Medwin says:—‘He told me the greatest delight he experienced at Eton was from boating. . . . He never lost the fondness with which he regarded the Thames, no new acquaintance when he went to Eton, for at Brentford we had more than once played the truant, and rowed to Kew, and once to Richmond.’<sup>1</sup> But these truant excursions were exceptional. His affection for boating began at a much later period, as I shall have occasion to notice. The second instance is:—‘I think he said he was just come from Ireland.’ In the autumn of 1814 it was not from Ireland, but from the Continent that he had just returned.

Captain Medwin’s *Life of Shelley* abounds with inaccuracies; not intentional misrepresentations, but misapprehensions and errors of memory. Several of these occur in reference to Shelley’s boyish passion for his cousin Harriet Grove. This, like Lord Byron’s early love for Miss Chaworth, came to nothing. But most boys of any feeling and imagination have some such passion, and, as in these instances, it usually comes to nothing. Much more has been made of both these affairs than they are worth. It is probable that few of Johnson’s poets passed through their boyhood without a similar attachment, but if it came at all under the notice of our literary Hercules, he did not think it worth recording. I shall notice this love-affair in its proper place, but chiefly for the sake of separating from it one or two matters which have been erroneously assigned to it.

Shelley often spoke to me of Eton, and of the per-

<sup>1</sup> Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 52.

secutions he had endured from the elder boys, with feelings of abhorrence which I never heard him express in an equal degree in relation to any other subject, except when he spoke of Lord Chancellor Eldon. He told me that he had been provoked into striking a penknife through the hand of one of his young tyrants, and pinning it to the desk, and that this was the cause of his leaving Eton prematurely : but his imagination often presented past events to him as they might have been, not as they were. Such a circumstance must have been remembered by others if it had actually occurred. But if the occurrence was imaginary, it was in a memory of cordial detestation that the imagination arose.

Mr. Hogg vindicates the system of fagging, and thinks he was himself the better for the discipline in after life. But Mr. Hogg is a man of imperturbable temper and adamantine patience : and with all this he may have fallen into good hands, for all big boys are not ruffians. But Shelley was a subject totally unfit for the practice in its best form, and he seems to have experienced it in its worst.

At Eton he became intimate with Doctor Lind, 'a name well known among the professors of medical science,' says Mrs. Shelley, who proceeds :—

' This man,' Shelley has often said, ' is exactly what an old man ought to be. Free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour ; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks ; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body, tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah ! far more than I owe to my father ; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, when <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hogg has ' where '.

he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom. Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private madhouse. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me, as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed if they had proceeded in their iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and with the servant's help I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority ; his love for me ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hogg subjoins :—

I have heard Shelley speak of his fever, and this scene at Field Place, more than once, in nearly the same terms as Mrs. Shelley adopts. It appeared to myself, and to others also, that his recollections were those of a person not quite recovered from a fever, and still disturbed by the horrors of the disease.

However this may have been, the idea that his father was continually on the watch for a pretext to lock him up, haunted him through life, and a mysterious intimation of his father's intention to effect such a purpose was frequently received by him, and communicated to his friends as a demonstration of the necessity under which he was placed of changing his residence and going abroad.

I pass over his boyish schemes for raising the devil, of which much is said in Mr. Hogg's book. He often spoke of them to me ; but the principal fact of which I have any recollection was one which he treated

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 31.

only as a subject of laughter—the upsetting into the fire in his chamber at Eton of a frying-pan full of diabolical ingredients, and the rousing up all the inmates in his dame's house in the dead of the night by the abominable effluvia. If he had ever had any faith in the possible success of his incantations, he had lost it before I knew him.

We now come to the first really important event of his life—his expulsion from Oxford.

At University College, Oxford, in October, 1810, Mr. Hogg first became acquainted with him. In their first conversation Shelley was exalting the physical sciences, especially chemistry. Mr. Hogg says :—

<sup>1</sup> As I felt but little interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest white and red; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun. . . . His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were in fact unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy . . . he often rubbed it up<sup>2</sup> fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers through his locks unconsciously, so that it was

<sup>1</sup> Hogg: 'As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest'—&c.

<sup>2</sup> Hogg: 'rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously.'

singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth perhaps excepted); yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual. . . . I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence.<sup>1</sup>

This blemish was his voice.

There is a good deal in these volumes about Shelley's discordant voice. This defect he certainly had; but it was chiefly observable when he spoke under excitement. Then his voice was not only dissonant, like a jarring string, but he spoke in sharp fourths, the most unpleasing sequence of sound that can fall on the human ear: but it was scarcely so when he spoke calmly, and not at all so when he read; on the contrary, he seemed then to have his voice under perfect command: it was good both in tune and in tone; it was low and soft, but clear, distinct, and expressive. I have heard him read almost all Shakespeare's tragedies, and some of his more poetical comedies, and it was a pleasure to hear him read them.

Mr. Hogg's description of Shelley's personal appearance gives a better idea of him than the portrait prefixed to his work, which is similar to that prefixed to the work of Mr. Trelawny, except that Mr. Trelawny's is lithographed<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Hogg's is en-

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Trelawny says—'With reference to the likeness of Shelley in this volume, I must add, that he never sat to a professional artist. In 1819, at Rome, a daughter of the celebrated Curran began a portrait of him in oil, which she never finished,

graved. These portraits do not impress themselves on me as likenesses. They seem to me to want the true outline of Shelley's features, and above all, to want their true expression. There is a portrait in the Florentine Gallery which represents him to me much more truthfully. It is that of Antonio Leisman, No. 155 of the *Ritratti de' Pittori*, in the Paris re-publication.

The two friends had made together a careful analysis of the doctrines of Hume. The papers were in Shelley's custody, and from a small part of them he made a little book, which he had printed, and which he sent by post to such persons as he thought would be willing to enter into a metaphysical discussion. He sent it under an assumed name, with a note, requesting that if the recipient were willing to answer the tract, the answer should be sent to a specified address in London. He received many answers; but in due time the little work and its supposed authors were denounced to the college authorities.

It was a fine spring morning, on Lady-day, in the year 1811 (says Mr. Hogg), when I went to Shelley's rooms. He was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened.

‘I am expelled,’ he said, as soon as he had recovered

and left in an altogether flat and inanimate state. In 1821 or 1822, his friend Williams made a spirited water-colour drawing, which gave a very good idea of the poet. Out of these materials Mrs. Williams, on her return to England after the death of Shelley, got Clint to compose a portrait, which the few who knew Shelley in the last year of his life thought very like him. The water-colour drawing has been lost, so that the portrait done by Clint is the only one of any value. I have had it copied and lithographed by Mr. Vinter, an artist distinguished both for the fidelity and refinement of his works, and it is now published for the first time.’ [T. L. P.] [This passage occurs at the end of Trelawny's Preface to the *Recollections*.]

himself a little. ‘I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I found our master, and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated, “Are you the author of this book?” “If I can judge from your manner,” I said, “you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country.” “Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?” the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice.

Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying, ‘I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is, but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly but firmly that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table.’

‘He immediately repeated his demand; I persisted in my refusal. And he said furiously, “Then you are expelled; and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest.”

‘One of the fellows took up two papers, and handed one of them to me; here it is.’ He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college. Shelley was full of spirit and courage, frank and fearless; but he was likewise shy, unpresuming, and eminently sensitive. I have been with him in many trying situations of his after-life, but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion.

A nice sense of honour shrinks from the most distant

touch of disgrace—even from the insults of those men whose contumely can bring no shame. He sat on the sofa, repeating with convulsive vehemence the words, ‘Expelled, expelled !’ his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering.<sup>1</sup>

A similar scene followed with Mr. Hogg himself, which he very graphically describes. The same questions, the same refusal to answer them, the same sentence of expulsion, and a peremptory order to quit the college early on the morrow. And accordingly, early on the next morning, Shelley and his friend took their departure from Oxford.

I accept Mr. Hogg’s account of this transaction as substantially correct. In Shelley’s account of it to me there were material differences; and making all allowance for the degree in which, as already noticed, his imagination coloured the past, there is one matter of fact which remains inexplicable. According to him, his expulsion was a matter of great form and solemnity; there was a sort of public assembly, before which he pleaded his own cause, in a long oration, in the course of which he called on the illustrious spirits who had shed glory on those walls to look down on their degenerate successors. Now, the inexplicable matter to which I have alluded is this: he showed me an Oxford newspaper, containing a full report of the proceedings, with his own oration at great length. I suppose the pages of that diurnal were not deathless,<sup>2</sup> and that it would now be vain to search for it;

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Registered to fame eternal  
In deathless pages of diurnal.

*Hudibras.* [T. L. P.]

[This is misquoted from part I, canto III, ll. 19-20:

And register’d by fame eternal,  
In deathless pages of diurnal.]

but that he had it, and showed it to me, is absolutely certain. His oration may have been, as some of Cicero's published orations were, a speech in the potential mood ; one which might, could, should, or would, have been spoken : but how in that case it got into the Oxford newspaper passes conjecture.<sup>1</sup>

His expulsion from Oxford brought to a summary conclusion his boyish passion for Miss Harriet Grove. She would have no more to say to him ; but I cannot see from his own letters, and those of Miss Hellen Shelley, that there had ever been much love on her side ; neither can I find any reason to believe that it continued long on his. Mr. Middleton follows Captain Medwin, who was determined that on Shelley's part it should be an enduring passion, and pressed into its service as testimonies some matters which had nothing to do with it. He<sup>2</sup> says *Queen Mab* was dedicated to Harriet Grove, whereas it was certainly dedicated to Harriet Shelley ; he even prints the dedication with the title, 'To Harriet G.,' whereas in the original the name of Harriet is only followed by asterisks ; and of another little poem, he says, 'That Shelley's disappointment in love affected him acutely, may be seen by some lines inscribed erroneously, "On F. G.," instead of "H. G.," and doubtless of a much earlier date than assigned by Mrs. Shelley to the fragment.'<sup>3</sup> Now, I know the circumstances to which the fragment refers. The initials of the lady's name were F. G., and the date assigned to the fragment, 1817, was strictly correct. The intrinsic evidence of both poems will show their utter inapplicability to Miss Harriet Grove.

<sup>1</sup> All attempts to discover this report have failed.

<sup>2</sup> Medwin, not Middleton.

<sup>3</sup> Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 164. In her first edition of the Poetical Works, 1839, Mrs. Shelley had printed these lines among the poems of 1817.

First let us see what Shelley himself says of her, in letters to Mr. Hogg:—

*Dec. 23, 1810.*—Her disposition was in all probability divested of the enthusiasm by which mine is characterized. . . . My sister attempted sometimes to plead my cause, but unsuccessfully. She said: ‘Even supposing I take your representation of your brother’s qualities and sentiments, which, as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although you<sup>1</sup> may not be aware of the exaggeration, what right have I<sup>1</sup>, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy which must end in delusive disappointment when he finds how really inferior I am to the being<sup>1</sup> his heated imagination has pictured?’

*Dec. 26, 1810.*—Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible, whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind, which told her not<sup>2</sup> to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment.

*Jan. 3, 1811.*—She is no longer mine. She abhors me as a sceptic, as what she was before.<sup>3</sup>

*Jan. 11, 1811.*—She is gone. She is lost to me for ever. She is married—married to a clod of earth. She will become as insensible herself: all those fine capabilities will moulder.

Next let us see what Miss Hellen Shelley says of the matter:—

His disappointment in losing the lady of his love had a great effect upon him. . . . It was not put an end to by *mutual* consent; but both parties were very young, and her father did not think the marriage would

<sup>1</sup> Hogg has *you* and *I* in italics, and ‘which’ after ‘being’. The passage is quoted from vol. i, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Hogg prints *not* in italics: vol. i, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> ‘She is no longer mine! She abhors me as a sceptic, as what she was before!’ Hogg, vol. i, p. 156.

be for his daughter's happiness. He, however, with truly honourable feeling, would not have persisted in his objection if his daughter had considered herself bound by a promise to my brother; but this was not the case, and time healed the wound by means of another Harriet, whose name and similar complexion perhaps attracted the attention of my brother.<sup>1</sup>

And lastly, let us see what the young lady's brother (C. H. G.) says of it:—

After our visit at Field Place (in the year 1810), we went to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bysshe, his mother, and Elizabeth joined us, and a very happy month we spent. Bysshe was full of life and spirits, and very well pleased with his successful devotion to my sister. In the course of that summer, to the best of my recollection, after we had retired into Wiltshire, a continual correspondence was going on, as I believe, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet.<sup>2</sup> But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also, on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister which had previously been permitted both by his father and mine.

We have here, I think, as unimpassioned a damsel as may be met in a summer's day. And now let us see the poems.

First, the dedication of *Queen Mab*: bearing in mind that the poem was begun in 1812, and finished in 1813, and that, to say nothing of the unsuitability of the offering to her who two years before had

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> In Charles Grove's letter, printed by Hogg (vol. ii, p. 551), the latter part of this sentence runs: 'a continual correspondence was going on, as, I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet.'

abhorred him as a sceptic and married a clod, she had never done or said any one thing that would justify her love being described as that which had warded off from him the scorn of the world: quite the contrary: as far as in her lay, she had embittered it to the utmost.

To HARRIET . . . .

Whose is the love that, gleaming thro' the world,  
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?  
Whose is the warm and partial praise,  
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul  
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?  
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,  
And loved mankind the more?

Harriet! on thine:—thou wert my purer mind,  
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;  
Thine are these early wilding flowers,  
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love,  
And know, though time may change and years  
may roll  
Each flowret gathered in my heart  
It consecrates to thine.

Next the verses on F. G.:—

Her voice did quiver as we parted,  
Yet knew I not that heart was broken  
From which it came, and I departed,  
Heeding not the words then spoken.  
Misery—oh, Misery!  
This world is all too wide for thee!

Can anything be more preposterously inappropriate to his parting with Harriet Grove? These verses relate to a far more interesting person and a deeply

tragic event ; but they belong, as I have said, to the year 1817, a later period than this article embraces.<sup>1</sup>

From Oxford the two friends proceeded to London, where they took a joint lodging, in which, after a time, Shelley was left alone, living uncomfortably on precarious resources. It was here that the second Harriet consoled him for the loss of the first, who, I feel thoroughly convinced, never more troubled his repose.

To the circumstances of Shelley's first marriage I find no evidence but in my own recollection of what he told me respecting it. He often spoke to me of it ; and with all allowance for the degree in which his imagination coloured events, I see no improbability in the narration.

Harriet Westbrook, he said, was a schoolfellow of one of his sisters ; and when, after his expulsion from Oxford, he was in London, without money, his father having refused him all assistance, this sister had requested her fair schoolfellow to be the medium of conveying to him such small sums as she and her sisters could afford to send, and other little presents which they thought would be acceptable. Under these circumstances the ministry of the young and beautiful girl presented itself like that of a guardian angel, and there was a charm about their intercourse which he readily persuaded himself could not be exhausted in the duration of life. The result was that in August, 1811, they eloped to Scotland, and were married in Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> Their journey had absorbed their stock of money. They took a lodging, and Shelley immediately told the landlord who they were,

<sup>1</sup> Shelley commemorated in these lines his last parting from Fanny Godwin, who committed suicide in the October of 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Not at Gretna Green, as stated by Captain Medwin.  
[T. L. P.]

what they had come for, and the exhaustion of their resources, and asked him if he would take them in, and advance them money to get married and to carry them on till they could get a remittance. This the man agreed to do, on condition that Shelley would treat him and his friends to a supper in honour of the occasion. It was arranged accordingly ; but the man was more obtrusive and officious than Shelley was disposed to tolerate. The marriage was concluded, and in the evening Shelley and his bride were alone together, when the man tapped at their door. Shelley opened it, and the landlord said to him—‘ It is customary here at weddings for the guests to come in, in the middle of the night, and wash the bride with whisky.’ ‘ I immediately,’ said Shelley, ‘ caught up my brace of pistols, and pointing them both at him, said to him,—I have had enough of your impertinence ; if you give me any more of it I will blow your brains out ; on which he ran or rather tumbled down stairs, and I bolted the doors.’

The custom of washing the bride with whisky is more likely to have been so made known to him than to have been imagined by him.

Leaving Edinburgh, the young couple led for some time a wandering life. At the lakes they were kindly received by the Duke of Norfolk, and by others through his influence. They then went to Ireland, landed at Cork, visited the lakes of Killarney, and stayed some time in Dublin, where Shelley became a warm repealer and emancipator. They then went to the Isle of Man, then to Nant Gwillt<sup>1</sup> in Radnorshire, then to

<sup>1</sup> Nant Gwillt, the Wild Brook, flows into the Elan (a tributary of the Wye), about five miles above Rhayader. Above the confluence, each stream runs in a rocky channel through a deep narrow valley. In each of these valleys is or was a spacious mansion, named from the respective streams. Cwm Elan House was the seat of Mr. Grove, whom Shelley had visited there

Lymouth near Barnstaple,<sup>1</sup> then came for a short time to London ; then went to reside in a furnished house belonging to Mr. Maddocks at Tanyrallt,<sup>2</sup> near Tremadoc, in Caernarvonshire. Their residence at this place was made chiefly remarkable by an imaginary attack on his life, which was followed by their immediately leaving Wales.

Mr. Hogg inserts several letters relative to this romance of a night : the following extract from one of Harriet Shelley's, dated from Dublin, March 12th, 1813, will give a sufficient idea of it :—

Mr. Shelley promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate.

On the night of the 26th February we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half an hour, when Mr. S—— heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went down stairs with two pistols which he had loaded that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, when he heard footsteps retreating ; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opened into the shrubbery ; the man fired at Mr. S——, which

before his marriage in 1811. Nant Gwillt House, when Shelley lived in it in 1812, was inhabited by a farmer, who let some of the best rooms in lodgings. At a subsequent period I stayed a day in Rhayader, for the sake of seeing this spot. It is a scene of singular beauty. [T. L. P.]

<sup>1</sup> He had introduced himself by letter to Mr. Godwin, and they carried on a correspondence some time before they met. Mr. Godwin, after many pressing invitations, went to Lymouth on an intended visit, but when he arrived the birds had flown. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> *Tan-yr-allt*—Under the precipice. [T. L. P.]

he avoided. Bysshe then fired, but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words—‘ By God, I will be revenged. I will murder your wife, and will ravish your sister ! By God, I will be revenged ! ’ He then fled, as we hoped for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o’clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S—— then advised us to retire, thinking it was impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our man-servant—who had only arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house—to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran down stairs, when I perceived that Bysshe’s flannel gown had been shot through, and the window-curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was, when he heard a noise at the window ; he went there, and a man thrust his arm though the glass and fired at him. Thank heaven ! the ball went through his gown and he remained unhurt. Mr. S—— happened to stand sideways ; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off ; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword which we found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him, and just as he was pulling it away Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape. This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night ; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him, and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a man . . . . who, the next morning,<sup>1</sup> went and told the shopkeepers that

<sup>1</sup> Hogg prints : ‘ as there is a man of the name of Luson, who, the next morning that it happened, went’—&c. *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, pp. 208-10. The name was really Leeson.

it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery. We left Tanyrallt on Sunday.

Mr. Hogg subjoins :—

Persons acquainted with the localities and with the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion that no such attack was ever made.

I may state more particularly the result of the investigation to which Mr. Hogg alludes. I was in North Wales in the summer of 1813, and heard the matter much talked of. Persons who had examined the premises on the following morning had found that the grass of the lawn appeared to have been much trampled and rolled on, but there were no footmarks on the wet ground, except between the beaten spot and the window ; and the impression of the ball on the wainscot showed that the pistol had been fired towards the window, and not from it. This appeared conclusive as to the whole series of operations having taken place from within. The mental phenomena in which this sort of semi-delusion originated will be better illustrated by one which occurred at a later period, and which, though less tragical in its appearances, was more circumstantial in its development, and more perseveringly adhered to. It will not come within the scope of this article.

I saw Shelley for the first time in 1812, just before he went to Tanyrallt. I saw him again once or twice before I went to North Wales in 1813. On my return he was residing at Bracknell, and invited me to visit him there. This I did, and found him with his wife Harriet, her sister Eliza, and his newly-born daughter Ianthe.

Mr. Hogg says :—

This accession to his family did not appear to afford him any gratification, or to create an interest. He never spoke of this child to me, and to this hour I never set eyes on her.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hogg is mistaken about Shelley's feelings as to his first child. He was extremely fond of it, and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. His song was 'Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani.'<sup>2</sup> It did not please me, but, what was more important, it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful. Shelley was extremely fond of his children. He was pre-eminently an affectionate father. But to this first-born there were accompaniments which did not please him. The child had a wet-nurse whom he did not like, and was much looked after by his wife's sister, whom he intensely disliked. I have often thought that if Harriet had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the link of their married love would not have been so readily broken. But of this hereafter, when we come to speak of the separation.

At Bracknell, Shelley was surrounded by a numerous society, all in a great measure of his own opinions in relation to religion and politics, and the larger portion of them in relation to vegetable

<sup>1</sup> Hogg wrote 'his child', not 'this child' (*Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, p. 462).

<sup>2</sup> The tune was the uniform repetition of three notes, not very true in their intervals. The nearest resemblance to it will be found in the second, third, and fourth of a minor key: B C D, for example, on the key of A natural: a crotchet and two quavers. [T. L. P.]

diet. But they wore their rue with a difference. Every one of them adopting some of the articles of the faith of their general church, had each nevertheless some predominant crotchet of his or her own, which left a number of open questions for earnest and not always temperate discussion. I was sometimes irreverent enough to laugh at the fervour with which opinions utterly unconducive to any practical result were battled for as matters of the highest importance to the well-being of mankind; Harriet Shelley was always ready to laugh with me, and we thereby both lost caste with some of the more hot-headed of the party. Mr. Hogg was not there during my visit, but he knew the whole of the persons there assembled, and has given some account of them under their initials, which for all public purposes are as well as their names.

The person among them best worth remembering was the gentleman whom Mr. Hogg calls J. F. N.,<sup>1</sup> of whom he relates some anecdotes.

I will add one or two from my own experience. He was an estimable man and an agreeable companion, and he was not the less amusing that he was the absolute impersonation of a single theory, or rather of two single theories rolled into one. He held that all diseases and all aberrations, moral and physical, had their origin in the use of animal food and of fermented and spirituous liquors; that the universal adoption of a diet of roots, fruits, and distilled<sup>2</sup> water, would restore the golden age of universal health, purity, and peace; that this most ancient and sublime morality was mystically incul-

<sup>1</sup> Newton, whom Shelley met first in November, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> He held that water in its natural state was full of noxious impurities, which were only to be got rid of by distillation.  
[T. L. P.]

cated in the most ancient Zodiac, which was that of Dendera ; that this Zodiac was divided into two hemispheres, the upper hemisphere being the realm of Oromazes or the principle of good, the lower that of Ahrimanes or the principle of evil ; that each of these hemispheres was again divided into two compartments, and that the four lines of division radiating from the centre were the prototype of the Christian cross. The two compartments of Oromazes were those of Uranus or Brahma the Creator, and of Saturn or Veishnu the Preserver. The two compartments of Ahrimanes were those of Jupiter or Seva the Destroyer, and of Apollo or Krishna the Restorer. The great moral doctrine was thus symbolized in the Zodiacial signs :—In the first compartment, Taurus the Bull, having in the ancient Zodiac a torch in his mouth, was the type of eternal light. Cancer the Crab was the type of celestial matter, sleeping under the all-covering water, on which Brahma floated in a lotus-flower for millions of ages. From the union, typified by Gemini, of light and celestial matter, issued in the second compartment Leo, Primogenial Love, mounted on the back of a Lion, who produced the pure and perfect nature of things in Virgo, and Libra the Balance denoted the coincidence of the ecliptic with the equator, and the equality of man's happy existence. In the third compartment, the first entrance of evil into the system was typified by the change of celestial into terrestrial matter—Cancer into Scorpio. Under this evil influence man became a hunter, Sagittarius the Archer, and pursued the wild animals, typified by Capricorn. Then, with animal food and cookery, came death into the world, and all our woe. But in the fourth compartment, Dhanwantari or *Æsculapius*, Aquarius the

Waterman, arose from the sea, typified by Pisces the Fish, with a jug of pure water and a bunch of fruit, and brought back the period of universal happiness under Aries the Ram, whose benignant ascendancy was the golden fleece of the Argonauts, and the true talisman of Oromazes.

He saw the Zodiac in everything. I was walking with him one day on a common near Bracknell, when we came on a public-house which had the sign of the Horse-shoes. They were four on the sign, and he immediately determined that this number had been handed down from remote antiquity as representative of the compartments of the Zodiac. He stepped into the public-house, and said to the landlord, 'Your sign is the Horse-shoes?'—'Yes, sir.' 'This sign has always four Horse-shoes?'—'Why mostly, sir.' 'Not always?'—'I think I have seen three.' 'I cannot divide the Zodiac into three. But it is mostly four. Do you know why it is mostly four?'—'Why, sir, I suppose because a horse has four legs.' He bounced out in great indignation, and as soon as I joined him, he said to me, 'Did you ever see such a fool?'

I have also very agreeable reminiscences of Mrs. B. and her daughter Cornelia.<sup>1</sup> Of these ladies Shelley says (Hogg, ii. 515):—

I have begun to learn Italian again. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

Mr. Hogg 'could never learn why Shelley called

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. De Boinville was a relative of Mrs. Newton, by whom Shelley was introduced to her and her daughter.

Mrs. B. Meimouné.<sup>1</sup> In fact he called her, not Meimouné, but Maimuna, from Southeys *Thalaba* :—

Her face was as a damsel's face,  
And yet her hair was grey.<sup>2</sup>

She was a young-looking woman for her age, and her hair was as white as snow.

About the end of 1813, Shelley was troubled by one of his most extraordinary delusions. He fancied that a fat old woman who sat opposite to him in a mail coach was afflicted with elephantiasis, that the disease was infectious and incurable, and that he had caught it from her. He was continually on the watch for its symptoms; his legs were to swell to the size of an elephant's, and his skin was to be crumpled over like goose-skin. He would draw the skin of his own hands, arms, and neck very tight, and if he discovered any deviation from smoothness, he would seize the person next to him, and endeavour by a corresponding pressure to see if any corresponding deviation existed. He often startled young ladies in an evening party by this singular process, which was as instantaneous as a flash of lightning. His friends took various methods of dispelling the delusion. I quoted to him the words of Lucretius :—

Est elephas morbus, qui propter flumina Nili  
Gignitur Aegypto in media, neque praelerea usquam.<sup>3</sup>

He said these verses were the greatest comfort he had. When he found that, as the days rolled on, his legs retained their proportion, and his skin its smoothness, the delusion died away.

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from a paragraph in the *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, pp. 317-18.

<sup>2</sup> *Thalaba the Destroyer*: Book viii, stanza 23.

<sup>3</sup> *De Rerum Natura*: Book vi, ll. 1114-15.

I have something more to say belonging to this year 1813, but it will come better in connexion with the events of the succeeding year. In the meantime I will mention one or two traits of character in which chronology is unimportant.

It is to be remarked that, with the exception of the clergyman from whom he received his first instructions, the Reverend Mr. Edwards, of Horsham, Shelley never came, directly or indirectly, under any authority, public or private, for which he entertained, or had much cause to entertain, any degree of respect. His own father, the Brentford schoolmaster, the head master of Eton, the Master and Fellows of his college at Oxford, the Lord Chancellor Eldon, all successively presented themselves to him in the light of tyrants and oppressors. It was perhaps from the recollection of his early preceptor that he felt a sort of poetical regard for country clergymen, and was always pleased when he fell in with one who had a sympathy with him in classical literature, and was willing to pass *sub silentio* the debateable ground between them. But such an one was of rare occurrence. This recollection may also have influenced his feeling under the following transitory impulse.

He had many schemes of life. Amongst them all, the most singular that ever crossed his mind was that of entering the church. Whether he had ever thought of it before, or whether it only arose on the moment, I cannot say: the latter is most probable; but I well remember the occasion. We were walking in the early summer through a village where there was a good vicarage house, with a nice garden, and the front wall of the vicarage was covered with corchorus in full flower, a plant less

common then than it has since become. He stood some time admiring the vicarage wall. The extreme quietness of the scene, the pleasant pathway through the village churchyard, and the brightness of the summer morning, apparently concurred to produce the impression under which he suddenly said to me,—‘I feel strongly inclined to enter the church.’ ‘What,’ I said, ‘to become a clergyman, with your ideas of the faith?’ ‘Assent to the supernatural part of it,’ he said, ‘is merely technical. Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided disciple than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman may do. In his teaching as a scholar and a moralist; in his example as a gentleman and a man of regular life; in the consolation of his personal intercourse and of his charity among the poor, to whom he may often prove a most beneficent friend when they have no other to comfort them. It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land. And am I to deprive myself of the advantages of this admirable institution because there are certain technicalities to which I cannot give my adhesion, but which I need not bring prominently forward?’ I told him I thought he would find more restraint in the office than would suit his aspirations. He walked on some time thoughtfully, then started another subject, and never returned to that of entering the church.

He was especially fond of the novels of Brown—Charles Brockden Brown, the American, who died at the age of thirty-nine.

The first of these novels was *Wieland*. Wieland’s father passed much of his time alone in a summer-house, where he died of spontaneous combustion.

This summer-house made a great impression on Shelley, and in looking for a country house he always examined if he could find such a summer-house, or a place to erect one.

The second was *Ormond*. The heroine of this novel, Constantia Dudley, held one of the highest places, if not the very highest place, in Shelley's idealities of female character.

The third was *Edgar Huntley; or, the Sleep-walker*. In this his imagination was strangely captivated by the picture of Clitheroe in his sleep digging a grave under a tree.

The fourth was *Arthur Mervyn*: chiefly remarkable for the powerful description of the yellow fever in Philadelphia and the adjacent country, a subject previously treated in *Ormond*. No descriptions of pestilence surpass these of Brown. The transfer of the hero's affections from a simple peasant-girl to a rich Jewess, displeased Shelley extremely, and he could only account for it on the ground that it was the only way in which Brown could bring his story to an uncomfortable conclusion. The three preceding tales had ended tragically.

These four tales were unquestionably works of great genius, and were remarkable for the way in which natural causes were made to produce the semblance of supernatural effects. The superstitious terror of romance could scarcely be more strongly excited than by the perusal of *Wieland*.

Brown wrote two other novels, *Jane Talbot* and *Philip Stanley*, in which he abandoned this system, and confined himself to the common business of life. They had little comparative success.

Brown's four novels, Schiller's *Robbers*, and Goethe's *Faust*, were, of all the works with which he was familiar, those which took the deepest root

in his mind, and had the strongest influence in the formation of his character. He was an assiduous student of the great classical poets, and among these his favourite heroines were Nausicaa and Antigone. I do not remember that he greatly admired any of our old English poets, excepting Shakespeare and Milton. He devotedly admired Wordsworth and Coleridge, and in a minor degree Southey: these had great influence on his style, and Coleridge especially on his imagination; but admiration is one thing and assimilation is another; and nothing so blended itself with the structure of his interior mind as the creations of Brown. Nothing stood so clearly before his thoughts as a perfect combination of the purely ideal and possibly real, as Constantia Dudley.

He was particularly pleased with Wordsworth's Stanzas written in a pocket copy of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*. He said the fifth of these stanzas always reminded him of me. I told him the four first stanzas were in many respects applicable to him.<sup>1</sup> He said: 'It was a remarkable instance of Wordsworth's insight into nature, that he should have made intimate friends of two imaginary characters so essentially dissimilar, and yet severally so true to the actual characters of two friends, in a poem written long before they were known to each other, and while they were both boys, and totally unknown to him.'

The delight of Wordsworth's first personage in the gardens of the happy castle, the restless spirit that drove him to wander, the exhaustion with which he returned and abandoned himself to repose, might all in these stanzas have been sketched to the life

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.

from Shelley. The end of the fourth stanza is especially apposite :—

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was  
 Whenever from our valley he withdrew ;  
 For happier soul no living creature has  
 Than he had, being here the long day through.  
 Some thought he was a lover, and did woo :  
*Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong :*  
*But verse was what he had been wedded to ;*  
*And his own mind did like a tempest strong*  
*Come to him thus, and drive the weary night along.*<sup>1</sup>

He often repeated to me, as applicable to himself, a somewhat similar passage from *Childe Harold* :—

— On the sea

The boldest steer but where their ports invite :  
 But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,  
 Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er  
 shall be.<sup>2</sup>

His vegetable diet entered for something into his restlessness. When he was fixed in a place he adhered to this diet consistently and conscientiously, but it certainly did not agree with him ; it made him weak and nervous, and exaggerated the sensitiveness of his imagination. Then arose those thick-coming fancies which almost invariably preceded his change of place. While he was living from inn to inn he was obliged to live, as he said, 'on what he could get' ; that is to say, like other people. When he got well under this process he gave all the credit to locomotion, and held himself to have thus benefited, not in consequence of his change of regimen, but in spite of it. Once, when I was

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth wrote 'drove', not 'drive'.

<sup>2</sup> Canto iii, stanza lxx,

living in the country, I received a note from him wishing me to call on him in London. I did so, and found him ill in bed. He said, 'You are looking well. I suppose you go on in your old way, living on animal food and fermented liquor?' I answered in the affirmative. 'And here,' he said, 'you see a vegetable feeder overcome by disease.' I said, 'Perhaps the diet is the cause.' This he would by no means allow; but it was not long before he was again posting through some yet unvisited wilds, and recovering his health as usual, by living 'on what he could get'.

He had a prejudice against theatres which I took some pains to overcome. I induced him one evening to accompany me to a representation of the *School for Scandal*. When, after the scenes which exhibited Charles Surface in his jollity, the scene returned, in the fourth act, to Joseph's library, Shelley said to me—'I see the purpose of this comedy. It is to associate virtue with bottles and glasses, and villany with books.' I had great difficulty to make him stay to the end. He often talked of 'the withering and perverting spirit of comedy'. I do not think he ever went to another. But I remember his absorbed attention to Miss O'Neill's performance of Bianca in *Fazio*,<sup>1</sup> and it is evident to me that she was always in his thoughts when he drew the character of Beatrice in the *Cenci*.

In the season of 1817, I persuaded him to accompany me to the opera. The performance was *Don Giovanni*. Before it commenced he asked me if the opera was comic or tragic. I said it was composite,—more comedy than tragedy. After the killing of the Commendatore, he said, 'Do you call this comedy?' By degrees he became absorbed in

<sup>1</sup> Dean Milman's early drama.

the music and action. I asked him what he thought of Ambrogetti ? He said, 'He seems to be the very wretch he personates.' The opera was followed by a ballet, in which Mdlle. Milanie was the principal *danseuse*. He was enchanted with this lady ; said he had never imagined such grace of motion ; and the impression was permanent, for in a letter he afterwards wrote to me from Milan he said, 'They have no Mdlle. Milanie here.'

From this time till he finally left England he was an assiduous frequenter of the Italian Opera. He delighted in the music of Mozart, and especially in the *Nozze di Figaro*, which was performed several times in the early part of 1818.

With the exception of *Fazio*, I do not remember his having been pleased with any performance at an English theatre. Indeed I do not remember his having been present at any but the two above mentioned. I tried in vain to reconcile him to comedy. I repeated to him one day, as an admirable specimen of diction and imagery, Michael Perez's soliloquy in his miserable lodgings, from *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*. When I came to the passage :

There 's an old woman that 's now grown to marble,  
Dried in this brick-kiln : and she sits i' the chimney  
(Which is but three tiles, raised like a house of cards),  
The true proportion of an old smoked Sibyl.  
There is a young thing, too, that Nature meant  
For a maid-servant, but 'tis now a monster :  
She has a husk about her like a chestnut,  
With laziness, and living under the line here :  
And these two make a hollow sound together,  
Like frogs, or winds between two doors that murmur—<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, Act III, Sc. ii.

he said, 'There is comedy in its perfection. Society grinds down poor wretches into the dust of abject poverty, till they are scarcely recognizable as human beings; and then, instead of being treated as what they really are, subjects of the deepest pity, they are brought forward as grotesque monstrosities to be laughed at.' I said, 'You must admit the fineness of the expression.' 'It is true,' he answered; 'but the finer it is the worse it is, with such a perversion of sentiment.'

I postpone, as I have intimated, till after the appearance of Mr. Hogg's third and fourth volumes, the details of the circumstances which preceded Shelley's separation from his first wife, and those of the separation itself.

There never was a case which more strongly illustrated the truth of Payne Knight's observation, that 'the same kind of marriage, which usually ends a comedy, as usually begins a tragedy'.<sup>1</sup>

## MEMOIRS OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

### PART II

Y Gwîr yn erbyn y Byd.

The Truth against the World.

*Bardic Maxim.*

MR. HOGG's third and fourth volumes not having appeared, and the materials with which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley had supplied him having been resumed by them, and so much of them as it was

<sup>1</sup> No person in his senses was ever led into enterprises of dangerous importance by the romantic desire of imitating the fictions of a drama. If the conduct of any persons is influenced

thought desirable to publish having been edited by Lady Shelley,<sup>1</sup> with a connecting thread of narrative, I shall assume that I am now in possession of all the external information likely to be available towards the completion of my memoir; and I shall proceed to complete it accordingly, subject to the contingent addition of a postscript, if any subsequent publication should render it necessary.

Lady Shelley says in her preface :

We saw the book (Mr. Hogg's) for the first time when it was given to the world. It was impossible to imagine beforehand that from such materials a book could have been produced which has astonished and shocked those who have the greatest right to form an opinion on the character of Shelley; and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to the public with my apparent sanction,—for it was dedicated to myself.

Our feelings of duty to the memory of Shelley left us no other alternative than to withdraw the materials which we had originally entrusted to his early friend, and which we could not but consider had been strangely misused; and to take upon ourselves the task of laying them before the public, connected only by as slight

by the examples exhibited in such fictions, it is that of young ladies in the affairs of love and marriage: but I believe that such influence is much more rare than severe moralists are inclined to suppose; since there were plenty of elopements and stolen matches before comedies or plays of any kind were known. If, however, there are any romantic minds which feel this influence, they may draw an awful lesson concerning its consequences from the same source, namely, that the same kind of marriage, which usually ends a comedy, as usually begins a tragedy.—*Principles of Taste*, Book III, c. 2, sec. 17. [T. L. P.] [Peacock suppresses the quotation: 'viderunt primos argentea secula moechos' after 'were known'.]

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley Memorials*. From Authentic Sources. Edited by Lady Shelley. London : Smith and Elder. 1859. [T. L. P.]

a thread of narrative as would suffice to make them intelligible to the reader.

I am very sorry, in the outset of this notice, to be under the necessity of dissenting from Lady Shelley respecting the facts of the separation of Shelley and Harriet.

Captain Medwin represented this separation to have taken place by mutual consent. Mr. Leigh Hunt and Mr. Middleton adopted this statement; and in every notice I have seen of it in print it has been received as an established truth.

Lady Shelley says—

Towards the close of 1813 estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a crisis. Separation ensued, and Mrs. Shelley returned to her father's house. Here she gave birth to her second child—a son, who died in 1826.

The occurrences of this painful epoch in Shelley's life, and of the causes which led to them, I am spared from relating. In Mary Shelley's own words—'This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary.'

Of those remaining who were intimate with Shelley at this time, each has given us a different version of this sad event, coloured by his own views or personal feelings. Evidently Shelley confided to none of these friends. We, who bear his name, and are of his family, have in our possession papers written by his own hand, which in

after years may make the story of his life complete ; and which few now living, except Shelley's own children, have ever perused.

One mistake, which has gone forth to the world, we feel ourselves called upon positively to contradict.

Harriet's death has sometimes been ascribed to Shelley. This is entirely false. There was no immediate connexion whatever between her tragic end and any conduct on the part of her husband. It is true, however, that it was a permanent source of the deepest sorrow to him ; for never during all his after-life did the dark shade depart which had fallen on his gentle and sensitive nature from the selfsought grave of the companion of his early youth.

This passage ends the sixth chapter. The seventh begins thus—

To the family of Godwin, Shelley had, from the period of his self-introduction at Keswick, been an object of interest ; and the acquaintanceship which had sprung up between them during the poet's occasional visits to London had grown into a cordial friendship. It was in the society and sympathy of the Godwins that Shelley sought and found some relief in his present sorrow. He was still extremely young. His anguish, his isolation, his difference from other men, his gifts of genius and eloquent enthusiasm, made a deep impression on Godwin's daughter Mary, now a girl of sixteen, who had been accustomed to hear Shelley spoken of as something rare and strange. To her, as they met one eventful day in St. Pancras' churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past—how he had suffered, how he had been misled ; and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enrol his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow-men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity.

Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in his, and linked

her fortune with his own ; and most truthfully, as the remaining portion of these *Memorials* will prove, was the pledge of both redeemed.

I ascribe it to inexperience of authorship, that the sequence of words does not, in these passages, coincide with the sequence of facts : for in the order of words, the present sorrow would appear to be the death of Harriet. This however occurred two years and a half after the separation, and the union of his fate with Mary Godwin was simultaneous with it. Respecting this separation, whatever degree of confidence Shelley may have placed in his several friends, there are some facts which speak for themselves and admit of no misunderstanding.

The Scotch marriage had taken place in August, 1811. In a letter which he wrote to a female friend sixteen months later (Dec. 10, 1812), he had said—

How is Harriet a fine lady ? You indirectly accuse her in your letter of this offence—to me the most unpardonable of all. The ease and simplicity of her habits, the unassuming plainness of her address, the uncalculated connexion of her thought and speech, have ever formed in my eyes her greatest charms : and none of these are compatible with fashionable life, or the attempted assumption of its vulgar and noisy *éclat*. You have a prejudice to contend with in making me a convert to this last opinion of yours, which, so long as I have a living and daily witness to its futility before me, I fear will be insurmountable.—*Memorials*, p. 44.

Thus there had been no estrangement to the end of 1812. My own memory sufficiently attests that there was none in 1813.

From Bracknell, in the autumn of 1813, Shelley went to the Cumberland lakes ; then to Edinburgh. In Edinburgh he became acquainted with a young

Brazilian named Baptista, who had gone there to study medicine by his father's desire, and not from any vocation to the science, which he cordially abominated, as being all hypothesis, without the fraction of a basis of certainty to rest on. They corresponded after Shelley left Edinburgh, and subsequently renewed their intimacy in London. He was a frank, warm-hearted, very gentlemanly young man. He was a great enthusiast, and sympathized earnestly in all Shelley's views, even to the adoption of vegetable diet. He made some progress in a translation of *Queen Mab* into Portuguese. He showed me a sonnet, which he intended to prefix to his translation. It began—

Sublime Shelley, cantor di verdade !

and ended—

Surja *Queen Mab* a restaurar o mundo.

I have forgotten the intermediate lines. But he died early, of a disease of the lungs. The climate did not suit him, and he exposed himself to it incautiously.

Shelley returned to London shortly before Christmas, then took a furnished house for two or three months at Windsor, visiting London occasionally. In March, 1814, he married Harriet a second time, according to the following certificate:—

#### MARRIAGES IN MARCH 1814.

164. Percy Bysshe Shelley and Harriet Shelley (formerly Harriet Westbrook, Spinster, a Minor), both of this Parish, were remarried in this Church by Licence (the parties having been already married to each other according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Scotland), in order to obviate all doubts that have arisen, or shall or

may arise, touching or concerning the validity of the aforesaid Marriage (by and with the consent of John Westbrook, the natural and lawful father of the said Minor), this Twenty-fourth day of March, in the Year 1814.

By me,

EDWARD WILLIAMS, *Curate.*

This Marriage was solemnized between us { PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY,  
HARRIET SHELLEY, formerly Harriet Westbrook.

In the presence of { JOHN WESTBROOK,  
JOHN STANLEY.

The above is a true extract from the Register Book of Marriages belonging to the Parish of Saint George, Hanover-square ; extracted thence this eleventh day of April, 1859.—By me,

H. WEIGHTMAN, *Curate.*

It is, therefore, not correct to say that 'estrangements which had been slowly growing came to a crisis towards the close of 1813'. The date of the above certificate is conclusive on the point. The second marriage could not have taken place under such circumstances. Divorce would have been better for both parties, and the dissolution of the first marriage could have been easily obtained in Scotland.

There was no estrangement, no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after the second marriage, with the lady who was subsequently his second wife.

The separation did not take place by mutual consent. I cannot think that Shelley ever so represented it. He never did so to me : and the account which Harriet herself gave me of the entire proceeding was decidedly contradictory of any such supposition.

He might well have said, after first seeing Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 'Ut vidi! ut perii!' Nothing

that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, *from whom he was not then separated*, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind ‘suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection’. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said: ‘I never part from this.’<sup>1</sup> He added: ‘I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles\*:

Man’s happiest lot is not to be :  
And when we tread life’s thorny steep,  
Most blest are they, who earliest free  
Descend to death’s eternal sleep.’

Again, he said more calmly: ‘Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.’ I said, ‘It always appeared to me that you were very

\* Soph. *O. C.* 1225.

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Mr. Trelawny, dated June 18th, 1822, Shelley says:—‘You of course enter into society at Leghorn. Should you meet with any scientific person capable of preparing the *Prussic Acid, or Essential Oil of Bitter Almonds*, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated. I would give any price for this medicine. You remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it. My wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present; but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest. The *Prussic Acid* is used in medicine in infinitely minute doses; but that preparation is weak, and has not the concentration necessary to medicine all ills infallibly.

fond of Harriet?' Without affirming or denying this, he answered: 'But you did not know how I hated her sister.'

The term 'noble animal' he applied to his wife, in conversation with another friend now living, intimating that the nobleness which he thus ascribed to her would induce her to acquiesce in the inevitable transfer of his affections to their new shrine. She did not so acquiesce, and he cut the Gordian knot of the difficulty by leaving England with Miss Godwin on the 28th of July, 1814.

Shortly after this I received a letter from Harriet, wishing to see me. I called on her at her father's house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square. She then gave me her own account of the transaction, which, as I have said, decidedly contradicted the supposition of anything like separation by mutual consent.

She at the same time gave me a description, by no means flattering, of Shelley's new love, whom I had not then seen. I said, 'If you have described her correctly, what could he see in her?' 'Nothing,' she said, 'but that her name was Mary, and not only Mary, but Mary Wollstonecraft.'

The lady had nevertheless great personal and intellectual attractions, though it is not to be wondered at that Harriet could not see them.

I feel it due to the memory of Harriet to state my most decided conviction that her conduct as a wife

A single drop, even less, is a dose, and it acts by paralysis.'—*Trelawny*, pp. 100, 101.

I believe that up to this time he had never travelled without pistols for defence, nor without laudanum as a refuge from intolerable pain. His physical suffering was often very severe; and this last letter must have been written under the anticipation that it might become incurable, and unendurable to a degree from which he wished to be permanently provided with the means of escape. [T. L. P.]

was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless, as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour.

Mr. Hogg says: ‘Shelley told me his friend Robert Southey once said to him, “A man ought to be able to live with any woman. You see that I can, and so ought you. It comes to pretty much the same thing, I apprehend. There is no great choice or difference.”’—*Hogg*: vol. i, p. 423. *Any woman*, I suspect, must have been said with some qualification. But such an one as either of them had first chosen, Southey saw no reason to change.

Shelley gave me some account of an interview he had had with Southey. It was after his return from his first visit to Switzerland, in the autumn of 1814. I forget whether it was in town or country; but it was in Southey’s study, in which was suspended a portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft. Whether Southey had been in love with this lady, is more than I know. That he had devotedly admired her is clear from his *Epistle to Amos Cottle*, prefixed to the latter’s *Icelandic Poetry* (1797); in which, after describing the scenery of Norway, he says:—

Scenes like these  
Have almost lived before me, when I gazed  
Upon their fair resemblance traced by<sup>1</sup> him,  
Who sung the banished man of Ardebeil;  
Or to the eye of Fancy held by her,  
Who among women left no equal mind  
When from this world she passed; and I could weep  
To think that she<sup>2</sup> is to the grave gone down!

Where a note names Mary Wollstonecraft, the allusion being to her *Letters from Norway*.

<sup>1</sup> In Cottle’s *Icelandic Poetry*, p. xxxvi, a footnote on this word runs as follows:—‘Alluding to some views in Norway, taken by Mr. Charles Fox—Whose Plains, Consolations, and Delights of Achmed Ardebeili, from the Persian, are well known.’

<sup>2</sup> ‘SHE’ in the *Epistle*.

Shelley had previously known Southey, and wished to renew or continue friendly relations ; but Southey was repulsive. He pointed to the picture, and expressed his bitter regret that the daughter of that angelic woman should have been so misled. It was most probably on this occasion that he made the remark cited by Mr. Hogg : his admiration of Mary Wollstonecraft may have given force to the observation : and as he had known Harriet, he might have thought that, in his view of the matter, she was all that a husband could wish for.

Few are now living who remember Harriet Shelley. I remember her well, and will describe her to the best of my recollection. She had a good figure, light, active, and graceful. Her features were regular and well proportioned. Her hair was light brown, and dressed with taste and simplicity. In her dress she was truly *simplex munditiis*. Her complexion was beautifully transparent ; the tint of the blush rose shining through the lily. The tone of her voice was pleasant ; her speech the essence of frankness and cordiality ; her spirits always cheerful ; her laugh spontaneous, hearty, and joyous. She was well educated. She read agreeably and intelligently. She wrote only letters, but she wrote them well. Her manners were good ; and her whole aspect and demeanour such manifest emanations of pure and truthful nature, that to be once in her company was to know her thoroughly. She was fond of her husband, and accommodated herself in every way to his tastes. If they mixed in society, she adorned it ; if they lived in retirement, she was satisfied ; if they travelled, she enjoyed the change of scene.

That Shelley's second wife was intellectually better suited to him than his first, no one who knew them both will deny ; and that a man, who lived so totally

out of the ordinary world and in a world of ideas, needed such an ever-present sympathy more than the general run of men, must also be admitted ; but Southey, who did not want an intellectual wife, and was contented with his own, may well have thought that Shelley had equal reason to seek no change.

After leaving England, in 1814, the newly-affianced lovers took a tour on the Continent. He wrote to me several letters from Switzerland, which were subsequently published, together with a *Six Weeks' Tour*, written in the form of a journal by the lady with whom his fate was thenceforward indissolubly bound. I was introduced to her on their return.

The rest of 1814 they passed chiefly in London. Perhaps this winter in London was the most solitary period of Shelley's life. I often passed an evening with him at his lodgings, and I do not recollect ever meeting any one there, excepting Mr. Hogg. Some of his few friends of the preceding year had certainly at that time fallen off from him. At the same time he was short of money, and was trying to raise some on his expectations, from 'Jews and their fellow-Christians', as Lord Byron says. One day, as we were walking together on the banks of the Surrey Canal, and discoursing of Wordsworth, and quoting some of his verses, Shelley suddenly said to me : 'Do you think Wordsworth could have written such poetry, if he had ever had dealings with money-lenders ?' His own example, however, proved that the association had not injured his poetical faculties.

The canal in question was a favourite walk with us. The Croydon Canal branched off from it, and passed very soon into wooded scenery. The Croydon Canal is extinct, and has given place to the, I hope, more useful, but certainly less picturesque, railway. Whether the Surrey exists, I do not know. He had

a passion for sailing paper-boats, which he indulged on this canal, and on the Serpentine river. The best spot he had ever found for it was a large pool of transparent water, on a heath above Bracknell, with determined borders free from weeds, which admitted of launching the miniature craft on the windward, and running round to receive it on the leeward, side. On the Serpentine, he would sometimes launch a boat constructed with more than usual care, and freighted with halfpence. He delighted to do this in the presence of boys, who would run round to meet it, and when it landed in safety, and the boys scrambled for their prize, he had difficulty in restraining himself from shouting as loudly as they did. The river was not suitable to this amusement, nor even Virginia Water, on which he sometimes practised it ; but the lake was too large to allow of meeting the landing. I sympathized with him in this taste : I had it before I knew him : I am not sure that I did not originate it with him ; for which I should scarcely receive the thanks of my friend, Mr. Hogg, who never took any pleasure in it, and cordially abominated it, when, as frequently happened, on a cold winter day, in a walk from Bishopgate over Bagshot Heath, we came on a pool of water, which Shelley would not part from till he had rigged out a flotilla from any unfortunate letters he happened to have in his pocket. Whatever may be thought of this amusement for grown gentlemen, it was at least innocent amusement, and not mixed up with any 'sorrow of the meanest thing that feels'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,  
Taught both by what she<sup>2</sup> shows and what conceals,  
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

Wordsworth, *Hartleap Well*. [T. L. P.]  
[Wordsworth wrote 'One lesson', not 'This lesson'.]

<sup>2</sup> Nature.

In the summer of 1815, Shelley took a furnished house at Bishopgate, the eastern entrance of Windsor Park, where he resided till the summer of 1816. At this time he had, by the sacrifice of a portion of his expectations, purchased an annuity of £1000 a-year from his father, who had previously allowed him £200.

I was then living at Marlow, and frequently walked over to pass a few days with him. At the end of August, 1815, we made an excursion on the Thames to Lechlade, in Gloucestershire, and as much higher as there was water to float our skiff. It was a dry season, and we did not get much beyond Inglesham Weir, which was not then, as now, an immovable structure, but the wreck of a movable weir, which had been subservient to the navigation, when the river had been, as it had long ceased to be, navigable to Cricklade. A solitary sluice was hanging by a chain, swinging in the wind and creaking dismally. Our voyage terminated at a spot where the cattle stood entirely across the stream, with the water scarcely covering their hoofs. We started from, and returned to, Old Windsor, and our excursion occupied about ten days. This was, I think, the origin of Shelley's taste for boating, which he retained to the end of his life. On our way up, at Oxford, he was so much out of order that he feared being obliged to return. He had been living chiefly on tea and bread and butter, drinking occasionally a sort of spurious lemonade, made of some powder in a box, which, as he was reading at the time the *Tale of a Tub*, he called *the powder of pimperlimpimp*. He consulted a doctor, who may have done him some good, but it was not apparent. I told him, 'If he would allow me to prescribe for him, I would set him to rights.' He asked, 'What would be your prescription?' I said,

‘Three mutton chops, well peppered.’ He said, ‘Do you really think so?’ I said, ‘I am sure of it.’ He took the prescription; the success was obvious and immediate. He lived in my way for the rest of our expedition, rowed vigorously, was cheerful, merry, overflowing with animal spirits, and had certainly one week of thorough enjoyment of life. We passed two nights in a comfortable inn at Lechlade, and his lines, ‘A Summer Evening on the Thames at Lechlade,’ were written then and there. Mrs. Shelley (the second, who always bore his name), who was with us, made a diary of the little trip, which I suppose is lost.

The whole of the winter 1815–16 was passed quietly at Bishopgate. Mr. Hogg often walked down from London; and I, as before, walked over from Marlow. This winter was, as Mr. Hogg expressed it, a mere Atticism. Our studies were exclusively Greek. To the best of my recollection, we were, throughout the whole period, his only visitors. One or two persons called on him; but they were not to his mind, and were not encouraged to reappear. The only exception was a physician whom he had called in; the Quaker, Dr. Pope, of Staines. This worthy old gentleman came more than once, not as a doctor, but a friend. He liked to discuss theology with Shelley. Shelley at first avoided the discussion, saying his opinions would not be to the Doctor’s taste; but the Doctor answered, ‘I like to hear thee talk, friend Shelley; I see thee art very deep.’

At this time Shelley wrote his *Alastor*. He was at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted: *Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude*. The Greek word ‘Αλάστωρ is an evil genius, κακοδαιμων, though the sense of the two words is somewhat

different, as in the *Φανεὶς Ἀλάστωρ ἡ κακὸς δαίμων ποθέν*, of Aeschylus.<sup>1</sup> The poem treated the spirit of solitude as a spirit of evil. I mention the true meaning of the word because many have supposed *Alastor* to be the name of the hero of the poem.

He published this, with some minor poems, in the course of the winter.

In the early summer of 1816, the spirit of restlessness again came over him, and resulted in a second visit to the Continent. The change of scene was preceded, as more than once before, by a mysterious communication from a person seen only by himself, warning him of immediate personal perils to be incurred by him if he did not instantly depart.

I was alone at Bishopgate, with him and Mrs. Shelley, when the visitation alluded to occurred. About the middle of the day, intending to take a walk, I went into the hall for my hat. His was there, and mine was not. I could not imagine what had become of it; but as I could not walk without it, I returned to the library. After some time had elapsed, Mrs. Shelley came in, and gave me an account which she had just received from himself, of the visitor and his communication. I expressed some scepticism on the subject, on which she left me, and Shelley came in, with my hat in his hand. He said, 'Mary tells me, you do not believe that I have had a visit from Williams.' I said, 'I told her there were some improbabilities in the narration.' He said, 'You know Williams of Tremadoc?' I said, 'I do.' He said, 'It was he who was here to-day. He came to tell me of a plot laid by my father and

<sup>1</sup> Ἡρξέν μέν, ὁ δέσποινα, τοῦ παντὸς κακοῦ  
φανεὶς ἀλάστωρ ἡ κακὸς δαίμων ποθέν. Aesch. *Pers.* 353-4.  
[The author of the mischief, O my mistress,  
Was some foul fiend or Power on evil bent. *Plumptre.*]

uncle, to entrap me and lock me up. He was in great haste, and could not stop a minute, and I walked with him to Egham.' I said, 'What hat did you wear?' He said, 'This, to be sure.' I said, 'I wish you would put it on.' He put it on, and it went over his face. I said, 'You could not have walked to Egham in that hat.' He said, 'I snatched it up hastily, and perhaps I kept it in my hand. I certainly walked with Williams to Egham, and he told me what I have said. You are very sceptical.' I said, 'If you are certain of what you say, my scepticism cannot affect your certainty.' He said, 'It is very hard on a man who has devoted his life to the pursuit of truth, who has made great sacrifices and incurred great sufferings for it, to be treated as a visionary. If I do not know that I saw Williams, how do I know that I see you?' I said, 'An idea may have the force of a sensation; but the oftener a sensation is repeated, the greater is the probability of its origin in reality. You saw me yesterday, and will see me to-morrow.' He said, 'I can see Williams to-morrow if I please. He told me he was stopping at the Turk's Head Coffee-house, in the Strand, and should be there two days. I want to convince you that I am not under a delusion. Will you walk with me to London to-morrow, to see him?' I said, 'I would most willingly do so.' The next morning after an early breakfast we set off on our walk to London. We had got half way down Egham Hill, when he suddenly turned round, and said to me, 'I do not think we shall find Williams at the Turk's Head.' I said, 'Neither do I.' He said, 'You say that, because you do not think he has been there; but he mentioned a contingency under which he might leave town yesterday, and he has probably done so.' I said, 'At any rate, we should know

that he has been there.' He said, 'I will take other means of convincing you. I will write to him. Suppose we take a walk through the forest.' We turned about on our new direction, and were out all day. Some days passed, and I heard no more of the matter. One morning he said to me, 'I have some news of Williams; a letter and an enclosure.' I said, 'I shall be glad to see the letter.' He said, 'I cannot show you the letter; I will show you the enclosure. It is a diamond necklace. I think you know me well enough to be sure I would not throw away my own money on such a thing, and that if I have it, it must have been sent me by somebody else. It has been sent me by Williams.' 'For what purpose,' I asked. He said, 'To prove his identity and his sincerity.' 'Surely,' I said, 'your showing me a diamond necklace will prove nothing but that you have one to show.' 'Then,' he said, 'I will not show it you. If you will not believe me, I must submit to your incredulity.' There the matter ended. I never heard another word of Williams, nor of any other mysterious visitor. I had on one or two previous occasions argued with him against similar semi-delusions, and I believe if they had always been received with similar scepticism, they would not have been often repeated; but they were encouraged by the ready credulity with which they were received by many who ought to have known better. I call them semi-delusions, because, for the most part, they had their basis in his firm belief that his father and uncle had designs on his liberty. On this basis, his imagination built a fabric of romance, and when he presented it as substantive fact, and it was found to contain more or less of inconsistency, he felt his self-esteem interested in maintaining it by accumulated circumstances, which

severally vanished under the touch of investigation, like Williams's location at the Turk's Head Coffee-house.

I must add, that in the expression of these differences, there was not a shadow of anger. They were discussed with freedom and calmness ; with the good temper and good feeling which never forsook him in conversations with his friends. There was an evident anxiety for acquiescence, but a quiet and gentle toleration of dissent. A personal discussion, however interesting to himself, was carried on with the same calmness as if it related to the most abstract question in metaphysics.

Indeed, one of the great charms of intercourse with him was the perfect good humour and openness to conviction with which he responded to opinions opposed to his own. I have known eminent men, who were no doubt very instructive as lecturers to people who like being lectured ; which I never did ; but with whom conversation was impossible. To oppose their dogmas, even to question them, was to throw their temper off its balance. When once this infirmity showed itself in any of my friends, I was always careful not to provoke a second ebullition. I submitted to the preachment, and was glad when it was over.

The result was a second trip to Switzerland. During his absence he wrote me several letters, some of which were subsequently published by Mrs. Shelley ; others are still in my possession. Copies of two of these were obtained by Mr. Middleton, who has printed a portion of them. Mrs. Shelley was at that time in the habit of copying Shelley's letters, and these were among some papers accidentally left at Marlow, where they fell into unscrupulous hands. Mr. Middleton must have been aware that he had

no right to print them without my consent. I might have stopped his publication by an injunction, but I did not think it worth while, more especially as the book, though abounding with errors adopted from Captain Medwin and others, is written with good feeling towards the memory of Shelley.

During his stay in Switzerland he became acquainted with Lord Byron. They made together an excursion round the lake of Geneva, of which he sent me the detail in a diary. This diary was published by Mrs. Shelley, but without introducing the name of Lord Byron, who is throughout called 'my companion'. The diary was first published during Lord Byron's life; but why his name was concealed I do not know. Though the changes are not many, yet the association of the two names gives it great additional interest.

At the end of August, 1816, they returned to England, and Shelley passed the first fortnight of September with me at Marlow. July and August, 1816, had been months of perpetual rain. The first fortnight of September was a period of unbroken sunshine. The neighbourhood of Marlow abounds with beautiful walks; the river scenery is also fine. We took every day a long excursion, either on foot or on the water. He took a house there, partly, perhaps principally, for the sake of being near me. While it was being fitted and furnished, he resided at Bath.

In December, 1816, Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine river, not, as Captain Medwin says, in a pond at the bottom of her father's garden at Bath. Her father had not then left his house in Chapel Street, and to that house his daughter's body was carried.

On the 30th of December, 1816, Shelley married his

second wife; and early in the ensuing year they took possession of their house at Marlow. It was a house with many large rooms and extensive gardens. He took it on a lease for twenty-one years, furnished it handsomely, fitted up a library in a room large enough for a ball-room, and settled himself down, as he supposed, for life. This was an agreeable year to all of us. Mr. Hogg was a frequent visitor. We had a good deal of rowing and sailing, and we took long walks in all directions. He had other visitors from time to time. Amongst them were Mr. Godwin and Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Hunt. He led a much more social life than he had done at Bishopgate; but he held no intercourse with his immediate neighbours. He said to me more than once, 'I am not wretch enough to tolerate an acquaintance.'

In the summer of 1817 he wrote the *Revolt of Islam*, chiefly on a seat on a high prominence in Bisham Wood, where he passed whole mornings with a blank book and a pencil. This work, when completed, was printed under the title of *Laon and Cythna*. In this poem he had carried the expression of his opinions, moral, political, and theological, beyond the bounds of discretion. The terror which, in those days of persecution of the press, the perusal of the book inspired in Mr. Ollier, the publisher, induced him to solicit the alteration of many passages which he had marked. Shelley was for some time inflexible; but Mr. Ollier's refusal to publish the poem as it was, backed by the advice of all his friends, induced him to submit to the required changes. Many leaves were cancelled, and it was finally published as *The Revolt of Islam*. Of *Laon and Cythna* only three copies had gone forth. One of these had found its way to the *Quarterly Review*,

and the opportunity was readily seized of pouring out on it one of the most malignant effusions of the *odium theologicum* that ever appeared even in those days, and in that periodical.

During his residence at Marlow we often walked to London, frequently in company with Mr. Hogg. It was our usual way of going there, when not pressed by time. We went by a very pleasant route over fields, lanes, woods, and heaths to Uxbridge, and by the main road from Uxbridge to London. The total distance was thirty-two miles to Tyburn turnpike. We usually stayed two nights, and walked back on the third day. I never saw Shelley tired with these walks. Delicate and fragile as he appeared, he had great muscular strength. We took many walks in all directions from Marlow, and saw everything worth seeing within a radius of sixteen miles. This comprehended, among other notable places, Windsor Castle and Forest, Virginia Water, and the spots which were consecrated by the memories of Cromwell, Hampden, and Milton, in the Chiltern district of Buckinghamshire. We had also many pleasant excursions, rowing and sailing on the river, between Henley and Maidenhead.

Shelley, it has been seen, had two children by his first wife. These children he claimed after Harriet's death, but her family refused to give them up. They resisted the claim in Chancery, and the decree of Lord Eldon was given against him.

The grounds of Lord Eldon's decision have been misrepresented. The petition had adduced *Queen Mab*, and other instances of Shelley's opinions on religion, as one of the elements of the charges against him; but the judgement ignores this element, and rests entirely upon moral conduct. It was distinctly laid down that the principles which Shelley

had professed in regard to some of the most important relations of life, had been carried by him into practice ; and that the practical development of those principles, not the principles themselves, had determined the judgement of the Court.

Lord Eldon intimated that his judgement was not final ; but nothing would have been gained by an appeal to the House of Peers. Liberal law lords were then unknown ; neither could Shelley have hoped to enlist public opinion in his favour. A Scotch marriage, contracted so early in life, might not have been esteemed a very binding tie : but the separation which so closely followed on a marriage in the Church of England, contracted two years and a half later, presented itself as the breach of a much more solemn and deliberate obligation.

It is not surprising that so many persons at the time should have supposed that the judgement had been founded, at least partly, on religious grounds. Shelley himself told me, that Lord Eldon had expressly stated that such grounds were excluded, and the judgement itself showed it. But few read the judgement. It did not appear in the newspapers, and all report of the proceedings was interdicted. Mr. Leigh Hunt accompanied Shelley to the Court of Chancery. Lord Eldon was extremely courteous ; but he said blandly, and at the same time determinedly, that a report of the proceedings would be punished as a contempt of Court. The only explanation I have ever been able to give to myself of his motive for this prohibition was, that he was willing to leave the large body of fanatics among his political supporters under delusion as to the grounds of his judgement ; and that it was more for his political interest to be stigmatized by Liberals as an inquisitor, than to incur in any degree the imputation of

theological liberality from his own persecuting party.

Since writing the above passages I have seen, in the *Morning Post* of November 22nd, the report of a meeting of the Juridical Society,<sup>1</sup> under the presidency of the present Lord Chancellor, in which a learned brother read a paper, proposing to revive the system of persecution against 'blasphemous libel'; and in the course of his lecture he said— 'The Court of Chancery, on the doctrine *Parens patriae*, deprived the parent of the guardianship of his children when his principles were in antagonism to religion, as<sup>2</sup> in the case of the poet Shelley.' The Attorney-General observed on this: 'With respect<sup>3</sup> to the interference of the Court of Chancery in the case of Shelley's children, there was a great deal of misunderstanding. It was not because their father was an unbeliever in Christianity, but because he violated and refused to acknowledge the ordinary usages of morality.' The last words are rather vague and twaddling, and I suppose are not the *ipsissima verba* of the Attorney-General. The essence and quintessence of Lord Eldon's judgement was this: 'Mr. Shelley long ago published and maintained the doctrine that marriage is a contract binding only during mutual pleasure. He has carried out that doctrine in his own practice; he has done nothing to show that he does not still maintain it; and I consider such practice injurious to the best interests of society.' I am not apologizing for Lord Eldon, nor vindicating his judgement. I am merely explaining it, simply under the wish that those who talk about it should know what it really was.

Some of Shelley's friends have spoken and written

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II.    <sup>2</sup> *Morning Post*: 'as it did in the case'.  
<sup>3</sup> *Morning Post*: 'With regard to'.

of Harriet as if to vindicate him it were necessary to disparage her. They might, I think, be content to rest the explanation of his conduct on the ground on which he rested it himself—that he had found in another the intellectual qualities which constituted his ideality of the partner of his life. But Harriet's untimely fate occasioned him deep agony of mind, which he felt the more because for a long time he kept the feeling to himself. I became acquainted with it in a somewhat singular manner.

I was walking with him one evening in Bisham Wood, and we had been talking, in the usual way, of our ordinary subjects, when he suddenly fell into a gloomy reverie. I tried to rouse him out of it, and made some remarks which I thought might make him laugh at his own abstraction. Suddenly he said to me, still with the same gloomy expression: 'There is one thing to which I have decidedly made up my mind. I will take a great glass of ale every night.' I said, laughingly, 'A very good resolution, as the result of a melancholy musing.' 'Yes,' he said; 'but you do not know why I take it. I shall do it to deaden my feelings: for I see that those who drink ale have none.' The next day he said to me: 'You must have thought me very unreasonable yesterday evening?' I said, 'I did, certainly.' 'Then,' he said, 'I will tell you what I would not tell any one else. I was thinking of Harriet.' I told him, 'I had no idea of such a thing: it was so long since he had named her. I had thought he was under the influence of some baseless morbid feeling; but if ever I should see him again in such a state of mind, I would not attempt to disturb it.'

There was not much comedy in Shelley's life; but his antipathy to 'acquaintance' led to incidents of some drollery. Amongst the persons who called

on him at Bishopgate, was one whom he tried hard to get rid of, but who forced himself on him in every possible manner. He saw him at a distance one day, as he was walking down Egham Hill, and instantly jumped through a hedge, ran across a field, and laid himself down in a dry ditch. Some men and women, who were haymaking in the field, ran up to see what was the matter, when he said to them, 'Go away, go away: don't you see it's a bailiff?' On which they left him, and he escaped discovery.

After he had settled himself at Marlow, he was in want of a music-master to attend a lady staying in his house, and I inquired for one at Maidenhead. Having found one, I requested that he would call on Mr. Shelley. One morning Shelley rushed into my house in great trepidation, saying: 'Barricade the doors; give orders that you are not at home. Here is——in the town.' He passed the whole day with me, and we sat in expectation that the knocker or the bell would announce the unwelcome visitor; but the evening fell on the unfulfilled fear. He then ventured home. It turned out that the name of the music-master very nearly resembled in sound the name of the obnoxious gentleman; and when Shelley's man opened the library door and said, 'Mr.——, sir,' Shelley, who caught the name as that of his *Monsieur Tonson*, exclaimed, 'I would just as soon see the devil!', sprang up from his chair, jumped out of the window, ran across the lawn, climbed over the garden-fence, and came round to me by a back-path: when we entrenched ourselves for a day's siege. We often laughed afterwards at the thought of what must have been his man's astonishment at seeing his master, on the announcement of the musician, disappear so instantaneously through the window, with the exclamation, 'I would just as soon see the

devil!' and in what way he could explain to the musician that his master was so suddenly 'not at home'.

Shelley, when he did laugh, laughed heartily, the more so as what he considered the perversions of comedy excited not his laughter but his indignation, although such disgusting outrages on taste and feeling as the burlesques by which the stage is now disgraced had not then been perpetrated. The ludicrous, when it neither offended good feeling, nor perverted moral judgement, necessarily presented itself to him with greater force.

Though his published writings are all serious, yet his letters are not without occasional touches of humour. In one which he wrote to me from Italy, he gave an account of a new acquaintance<sup>1</sup> who had a prodigious nose. 'His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian. It weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of nose that transforms all the g's its wearer utters into k's. It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires the utmost stretch of Christian charity to forgive. I, you know, have a little turn-up nose, H—— has a large hook one; but add them together, square them, cube them, you would have but a faint notion of the nose to which I refer.'

I may observe incidentally, that his account of his own nose corroborates the opinion I have previously expressed of the inadequate likeness of the published portraits of him, in which the nose has no turn-up. It had, in fact, very little; just as much as may be seen in the portrait to which I have referred, in the Florentine Gallery.

The principal employment of the female population

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gisborne.

in Marlow was lace-making, miserably remunerated. He went continually amongst this unfortunate population, and to the extent of his ability relieved the most pressing cases of distress. He had a list of pensioners, to whom he made a weekly allowance.

Early in 1818 the spirit of restlessness again came over him. He left Marlow, and, after a short stay in London, left England in March of that year, never to return.

I saw him for the last time, on Tuesday the 10th of March. The evening was a remarkable one, as being that of the first performance of an opera of Rossini in England, and of the first appearance here of Malibran's father, Garcia. He performed Count Almaviva in the *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Fodor was Rosina; Naldi, Figaro; Ambrogetti, Bartolo; and Angrisani, Basilio. I supped with Shelley and his travelling companions after the opera. They departed early the next morning.

Thus two very dissimilar events form one epoch in my memory. In looking back to that long-past time, I call to mind how many friends, Shelley himself included, I saw around me in the old Italian Theatre, who have now all disappeared from the scene. I hope I am not unduly given to be *laudator temporis acti*, yet I cannot but think that the whole arrangement of the opera in England has changed for the worse. Two acts of opera, a divertissement, and a ballet, seem very ill replaced by four or five acts of opera, with little or no dancing. These, to me, verify the old saying, that 'Too much of one thing is good for nothing'; and the quiet and decorous audiences, of whom Shelley used to say, 'It is delightful to see human beings so civilized,' are not agreeably succeeded by the vociferous assemblies, calling and recalling performers to the footlights, and showering

down bouquets to the accompaniment of their noisy approbation.

At the time of his going abroad, he had two children by his second wife—William and Clara; and it has been said that the fear of having these taken from him by a decree of the Chancellor had some influence on his determination to leave England; but there was no ground for such a fear. No one could be interested in taking them from him; no reason could be alleged for taking them from their mother; the Chancellor would not have entertained the question, unless a provision had been secured for the children; and who was to do this? Restlessness and embarrassment were the causes of his determination; and according to the Newtonian doctrine, it is needless to look for more causes than are necessary to explain the phenomena.

These children both died in Italy; Clara, the youngest, in 1818, William, in the following year. The last event he communicated to me in a few lines, dated Rome, June 8th, 1819:—

‘Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.’

A little later in the same month he wrote to me again from Livorno:—

‘Our melancholy journey finishes at this town; but we retrace our steps to Florence, where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months. O that I could return to England! How heavy a weight when misfortune is added to exile; and solitude, as if the measure were

not full, heaped high on both. O that I could return to England ! I hear you say, "Desire never fails to generate capacity." Ah ! but that ever-present Malthus, necessity, has convinced desire, that even though it generated capacity its offspring must starve.'

Again from Livorno ; August, 1819 (they had changed their design of going to Florence) :—

' I most devoutly wish that I were living near London. I don't think that I shall settle so far off as Richmond, and to inhabit any intermediate spot on the Thames, would be to expose myself to the river damps. Not to mention that it is not much to my taste. My inclinations point to Hampstead ; but I don't know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious and ever-beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends ? Social enjoyment in some form or other is the Alpha and Omega of existence. All that I see in Italy, and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine, half enclosing the plain, is nothing—it dwindles to smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour. How we prize what we despised when present ! So the ghosts of our dead associations rise and haunt us, in revenge for our having let them starve and abandoned them to perish.'

This seems to contrast strangely with a passage in Mrs. Shelley's journal, written after her return to England :—

' Mine own Shelley ! What a horror you had of returning to this miserable country ! To be here without you is to be doubly exiled ; to be away from Italy is to lose you twice.'—*Shelley Memorials*, p. 224.

It is probable, however, that as Mrs. Shelley was fond of Italy, he did not wish to disturb her enjoyment of it, by letting her see fully the deep-seated wish to return to his own country, which lay at the bottom of all his feelings.

It is probable also that, after the birth of his last child, he became more reconciled to residing abroad.

In the same year, the parents received the best consolation which nature could bestow on them, in the birth of another son, the present Sir Percy, who was born at Florence, on the 12th of November, 1819.

Shelley's life in Italy is best traced by his letters. He delighted in the grand aspects of nature; mountains, torrents, forests, and the sea; and in the ruins, which still reflected the greatness of antiquity. He described these scenes with extraordinary power of language, in his letters as well as in his poetry; but in the latter he peopled them with phantoms of virtue and beauty, such as never existed on earth. One of his most striking works in this kind is the *Prometheus Unbound*. He only once descended into the arena of reality, and that was in the tragedy of the *Cenci*.<sup>1</sup> This is unquestionably a work of great dramatic power, but it is as unquestionably not a work for the modern English stage. It would have

<sup>1</sup> Horace Smith's estimate of these two works appears to me just: 'I got from Ollier last week a copy of the *Prometheus Unbound*, which is certainly a most original, grand, and occasionally sublime work, evincing in my opinion a higher order of talent than any of your previous productions; and yet, contrary to your own estimation, I must say I prefer the *Cenci*, because it contains a deep and sustained human interest, of which we feel a want in the other. Prometheus himself certainly touches us nearly; but we see very little of him after his liberation; and, though I have no doubt it will be more admired than anything you have written, I question whether it will be so much read as the *Cenci*.'—*Shelley Memorials*, p. 145. [T. L. P.] [This letter is dated September 4th, 1820.]

been a great work in the days of Massinger. He sent it to me to introduce it to Covent Garden Theatre. I did so; but the result was as I expected. It could not be received; though great admiration was expressed of the author's powers, and great hopes of his success with a less repulsive subject. But he could not clip his wings to the littleness of the acting drama; and though he adhered to his purpose of writing for the stage, and chose Charles I for his subject, he did not make much progress in the task. If his life had been prolonged, I still think he would have accomplished something worthy of the best days of theatrical literature. If the gorgeous scenery of his poetry could have been peopled from actual life, if the deep thoughts and strong feelings which he was so capable of expressing, had been accommodated to characters such as have been and may be, however exceptional in the greatness of passion, he would have added his own name to those of the masters of the art. He studied it with unwearied devotion in its higher forms; the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, and Calderon. Of Calderon, he says, in a letter to me from Leghorn, September 21st, 1819:—

‘C. C.<sup>1</sup> is now with us on his way to Vienna. He has spent a year or more in Spain, where he has learnt Spanish; and I make him read Spanish all day long. It is a most powerful and expressive language, and I have already learnt sufficient to read with great ease their poet Calderon. I have read about twelve of his plays. Some of them certainly deserve to be ranked among the grandest and most perfect productions of the human mind. He excels all modern dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, whom he resembles, however, in the depth of thought and subtlety of imagination of his writings, and in the one rare power of interweaving

<sup>1</sup> Charles Clairmont.

delicate and powerful comic traits with the most tragic situations, without diminishing their interest. I rank him far above Beaumont and Fletcher.'

In a letter to Mr. Gisborne dated November, 1820, he says: 'I am bathing myself in the light and odour of the flowery and starry *Autos*. I have read them all more than once.' These were Calderon's religious dramas, being of the same class as those which were called *Mysteries* in France and England, but of a far higher order of poetry than the latter ever attained.

The first time Mr. Trelawny saw him, he had a volume of Calderon in his hand. He was translating some passages of the *Magico Prodigioso*.

I arrived late, and hastened to the Tre Palazzi, on the Lung' Arno, where the Shelleys and Williamses lived on different flats under the same roof, as is the custom on the Continent. The Williamses received me in their earnest, cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway, she laughingly said—

'Come in, Shelley; it's only our friend Tre just arrived.'

Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall, thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this wild-looking, beardless boy, could be the veritable monster at war with all

the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as a founder of a Satanic school? I would not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings'. Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly—

‘Calderon’s *Magico Prodigioso*; I am translating some passages in it.’

‘Oh, read it to us!'

Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretations of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality, I no longer doubted his identity. A dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked—

‘Where is he?’

Mrs. Williams said, ‘Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where.’—*Trelawny*, pp. 19–22.

From this time Mr. Trelawny was a frequent visitor to the Shelleys, and, as will be seen, a true and indefatigable friend.

In the year 1818, Shelley renewed his acquaintance with Lord Byron, and continued in friendly intercourse with him till the time of his death. Till that time his life, from the birth of his son Percy, was passed

chiefly in or near Pisa, or on the seashore between Genoa and Leghorn. It was unmarked by any remarkable events, except one or two, one of which appears to me to have been a mere disturbance of imagination. This was a story of his having been knocked down at the post office in Florence, by a man in a military cloak, who had suddenly walked up to him, saying, 'Are you the damned atheist Shelley?' This man was not seen by any one else, nor ever afterwards seen or heard of; though a man answering the description had on the same day left Florence for Genoa, and was followed up without success.

I cannot help classing this incident with the Tan-yr-allt assassination, and other semi-delusions, of which I have already spoken.

Captain Medwin thinks this 'cowardly attack' was prompted by some article in the *Quarterly Review*. The Quarterly Reviewers of that day had many sins to answer for in the way of persecution of genius, whenever it appeared in opposition to their political and theological intolerance; but they were, I am satisfied, as innocent of this 'attack' on Shelley, as they were of the death of Keats. Keats was consumptive, and foredoomed by nature to early death. His was not the spirit 'to let itself be snuffed out by an article'.<sup>1</sup>

With the cessation of his wanderings, his beautiful descriptive letters ceased also. The fear of losing

<sup>1</sup> Peacock had in mind the lines in *Don Juan*, canto xi, stanza lx :  
"Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

where Byron refers to Croker's attack on Keats in the *Quarterly*, vol. xix, pp. 204-8, taking Shelley's view (an unfounded one) of its deadly effect on

John Keats, who was killed off by one critique,  
Just as he really promised something great.

their only surviving son predominated over the love of travelling by which both parents were characterized. The last of this kind which was addressed to me was dated Rome, March 23rd, 1819. This was amongst the letters published by Mrs. Shelley. It is preceded by two from Naples—December 22nd, 1818, and January 26th, 1819. There was a third, which is alluded to in the beginning of his letter from Rome: 'I wrote to you the day before our departure from Naples.' When I gave Mrs. Shelley the other letters, I sought in vain for this. I found it, only a few months since, in some other papers, among which it had gone astray.

His serenity was temporarily disturbed by a calumny, which Lord Byron communicated to him. There is no clue to what it was; and I do not understand why it was spoken of at all. A mystery is a riddle, and the charity of the world will always give such a riddle the worst possible solution.

An affray in the streets of Pisa was a more serious and perilous reality. Shelley was riding outside the gates of Pisa with Lord Byron, Mr. Trelawny, and some other Englishmen, when a dragoon dashed through their party in an insolent manner. Lord Byron called him to account. A scuffle ensued, in which the dragoon knocked Shelley off his horse, wounded Captain Hay in the hand, and was dangerously wounded himself by one of Lord Byron's servants. The dragoon recovered; Lord Byron left Pisa; and so ended an affair which might have had very disastrous results.

Under present circumstances the following passage in a letter which he wrote to me from Pisa, dated March, 1820, will be read with interest:—

'I have a motto on a ring in Italian: "*Il buon tempo*

*verrà.*" There is a tide both in public and in private affairs which awaits both men and nations.

'I have no news from Italy. We live here under a nominal tyranny, administered according to the philosophic laws of Leopold, and the mild opinions which are the fashion here. Tuscany is unlike all the other Italian States in this respect.'

Shelley's last residence was a villa on the Bay of Spezzia. Of this villa Mr. Trelawny has given a view.

Amongst the new friends whom he had made to himself in Italy were Captain and Mrs. Williams. To these, both himself and Mrs. Shelley were extremely attached. Captain Williams was fond of boating, and furnished a model for a small sailing vessel, which he persisted in adopting against the protest of the Genoese builder and of their friend Captain Roberts, who superintended her construction. She was called the *Don Juan*. It took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and even then she was very crank in a breeze. Mr. Trelawny dispatched her from Genoa under the charge of two steady seamen and a boy named Charles Vivian. Shelley retained the boy and sent back the two sailors. They told Mr. Trelawny that she was a ticklish boat to manage, but had sailed and worked well, and that they had cautioned the gentlemen accordingly.

It is clear from Mr. Trelawny's account of a trip he had with them, that the only good sailor on board was the boy. They contrived to jam the mainsheet and to put the tiller starboard instead of port. 'If there had been a squall,' he said, 'we should have had to swim for it.'

'Not I,' said Shelley; 'I should have gone down with the rest of the pigs at the bottom of the boat,' meaning the iron pig-ballast.

In the meantime, at the instance of Shelley, Lord Byron had concurred in inviting Mr. Leigh Hunt and his family to Italy. They were to co-operate in a new quarterly journal, to which it was expected that the name of Byron would ensure an immediate and extensive circulation. This was the unfortunate *Liberal*, a title furnished by Lord Byron, of which four numbers were subsequently published. It proved a signal failure, for which there were many causes; but I do not think that any name or names could have buoyed it up against the dead weight of its title alone. A literary periodical should have a neutral name, and leave its character to be developed in its progress. A journal might be pre-eminently, on one side or the other, either aristocratical or democratical in its tone; but to call it the 'Aristocrat' or the 'Democrat' would be fatal to it.

Leigh Hunt arrived in Italy with his family on the 14th of June, 1822, in time to see his friend once and no more.

Shelley was at that time writing a poem called the *Triumph of Life*. The composition of this poem, the perpetual presence of the sea, and other causes (among which I do not concur with Lady Shelley in placing the solitude of his seaside residence, for his life there was less solitary than it had almost ever been),

contributed to plunge the mind of Shelley into a state of morbid excitement, the result of which was a tendency to see visions. One night loud cries were heard issuing from the saloon. The Williamses rushed out of their room in alarm; Mrs. Shelley also endeavoured to reach the spot, but fainted at the door. Entering the saloon, the Williamses found Shelley staring horribly into the air, and evidently in a trance. They waked him, and he related that a figure wrapped in a mantle came to

his bedside and beckoned him. He must then have risen in his sleep, for he followed the imaginary figure into the saloon, when it lifted the hood of its mantle, ejaculated 'Siete sodisfatto?'<sup>1</sup> and vanished. The dream is said to have been suggested by an incident occurring in a drama attributed to Calderon.

Another vision appeared to Shelley on the evening of May 6th, when he and Williams were walking together on the terrace. The story is thus recorded by the latter in his diary:—

Fine. Some heavy drops of rain fell without a cloud being visible. After tea, while walking with Shelley on the terrace, and observing the effect of moonshine on the waters, he complained of being unusually nervous, and, stopping short, he grasped me violently by the arm, and stared steadfastly on the white surf that broke upon the beach under our feet. Observing him sensibly affected, I demanded of him if he was in pain; but he only answered by saying 'There it is again! there!' He recovered after some time, and declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me, a naked child (Allegra, who had recently died) rise from the sea, and clasp its hands as if in joy, smiling at him. This was a trance that it required some reasoning and philosophy entirely to wake him from, so forcibly had the vision operated on his mind. Our conversation, which had been at first rather melancholy, led to this, and my confirming his sensations by confessing that I had felt the same, gave greater activity to his ever-wandering and lively imagination.—*Shelley Memorials*, pp. 191-3.<sup>2</sup>

On the afternoon of the 8th of July, 1822, after

<sup>1</sup> Are you satisfied?

<sup>2</sup> The whole of the foregoing extract, from 'contributed' to 'imagination', including the sentences printed in *Fraser's Magazine* as a connecting link of Peacock's, forms one continuous passage in the *Shelley Memorials*.

an absence of some days from home, Shelley and Williams set sail from Leghorn for their home on the Gulf of Spezzia. Trelawny watched them from Lord Byron's vessel, the *Bolivar*. The day was hot and calm. Trelawny said to his Genoese mate, 'They will soon have the land breeze.' 'May be,' said the mate, 'they<sup>1</sup> will soon have too much breeze. That gaff-topsail is foolish, in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board. Look at those black lines, and the dirty rags hanging under<sup>2</sup> them out of the sky.<sup>3</sup> Look at the smoke on the water. The devil is brewing mischief.' Shelley's boat disappeared in a fog.

Although the sun was obscured by mists, it was oppressively sultry. There was not a breath of air in the harbour. The heaviness of the atmosphere, and an unwonted stillness benumbed my senses. I went down into the cabin and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise over-head and went on deck. The men were getting up a chain cable to let go another anchor. There was a general stir amongst the shipping ; shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hailing from the ships and quays, boats scudding<sup>4</sup> rapidly to and fro. It was almost dark, although only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of the colour, and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing-craft and coasting-vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and

<sup>1</sup> *Trelawny* : 'she' not 'they'.

<sup>2</sup> *Trelawny* : 'on' not 'under'.

<sup>3</sup> Peacock omits Trelawny's 'they are a warning after 'sky'.

<sup>4</sup> *Trelawny* : 'sculling' not 'scudding'.

hub bub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder-squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done.—*Trelawny*, pp. 116–18.

Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams passed some days in dreadful suspense. Mrs. Shelley, unable to endure it longer, proceeded to Pisa, and rushing into Lord Byron's room with a face of marble, asked passionately, 'Where is my husband?' Lord Byron afterwards said, he had never seen anything in dramatic tragedy to equal the terror of Mrs. Shelley's appearance on that day.

At length the worst was known. The bodies of the two friends and the boy were washed on shore. That of the boy was buried in the sand. That of Captain Williams was burned on the 15th of August. The ashes were collected and sent to England for interment. The next day the same ceremony was performed for Shelley; and his remains were collected to be interred, as they subsequently were, in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. Lord Byron and Mr. Leigh Hunt were present on both occasions. Mr. Trelawny conducted all the proceedings, as he had conducted all the previous search. Herein, and in the whole of his subsequent conduct towards Mrs. Shelley, he proved himself, as I have already observed,

a true and indefatigable friend. In a letter which she wrote to me, dated Genoa, Sept. 29th, 1822, she said :—

‘Trelawny is the only quite disinterested friend I have here; the only one who clings to the memory of my loved ones as I do myself; but he, alas! is not<sup>1</sup> one of them, though he is really kind and good.’

The boat was subsequently recovered; the state in which everything was found in her, showed that she had not capsized. Captain Roberts first thought that she had been swamped by a heavy sea; but on closer examination, finding many of the timbers on the starboard quarter broken, he thought it certain that she must have been run down by a felucca in the squall.

I think the first conjecture the most probable. Her masts were gone, and her bowsprit broken. Mr. Trelawny had previously dispatched two large feluccas with ground-tackling to drag for her. This was done for five or six days. They succeeded in finding her, but failed in getting her up. The task was accomplished by Captain Roberts. The specified damage to such a fragile craft was more likely to have been done by the dredging apparatus, than by collision with a felucca.

So perished Percy Bysshe Shelley, in the flower of his age, and not perhaps even yet in the full flower of his genius; a genius unsurpassed in the description and imagination of scenes of beauty and grandeur; in the expression of impassioned love of ideal beauty; in the illustration of deep feeling by congenial imagery; and in the infinite variety of harmonious

<sup>1</sup> It is notable that in Peacock’s longer citation of this letter (p. 215) he prints ‘not as one of them’— a much more probable reading.

versification. What was, in my opinion, deficient in his poetry, was, as I have already said, the want of reality in the characters with which he peopled his splendid scenes, and to which he addressed or imparted the utterance of his impassioned feelings. He was advancing, I think, to the attainment of this reality. It would have given to his poetry the only element of truth which it wanted ; though at the same time, the more clear development of what men were would have lowered his estimate of what they might be, and dimmed his enthusiastic prospect of the future destiny of the world. I can conceive him, if he had lived to the present time, passing his days like Volney, looking on the world from his windows without taking part in its turmoils ; and perhaps like the same, or some other great apostle of liberty (for I cannot at this moment verify the quotation), desiring that nothing should be inscribed on his tomb, but his name, the dates of his birth and death, and the single word,

‘ DÉSILLUSIONNÉ.’

## PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

### SUPPLEMENTARY NOTICE

IN *Macmillan's Magazine* for June, 1860, there is an article entitled ‘Shelley in Pall Mall ; by Richard Garnett’, which contains the following passage :—

Much has been written about Shelley during the last three or four years, and the store of materials for his biography has been augmented by many particulars, some authentic and valuable, others trivial or mythical, or founded on mistakes or misrepresentations. It does

not strictly fall within the scope of this paper to notice any of these, but some of the latter class are calculated to modify so injuriously what has hitherto been the prevalent estimate of Shelley's character, and, while entirely unfounded, are yet open to correction from the better knowledge of so few, that it would be inexcusable to omit an opportunity of comment which only chance has presented, and which may not speedily recur. It will be readily perceived that the allusion is to the statements respecting Shelley's separation from his first wife, published by Mr. T. L. Peacock, in *Fraser's Magazine* for January last. According to these, the transaction was not preceded by long-continued unhappiness, neither was it an amicable agreement effected in virtue of a mutual understanding. The time cannot be distant when these assertions must be refuted by the publication of documents hitherto withheld, and Shelley's family have doubted whether it be worth while to anticipate it. Pending their decision, I may be allowed to state most explicitly that the evidence to which they would in such a case appeal, and to the nature of which I feel fully competent to speak, most decidedly contradicts the allegations of Mr. Peacock.

A few facts in the order of time will show, I will not say the extreme improbability, but the absolute impossibility, of Shelley's family being in possession of any such documents as are here alleged to exist.

In August, 1811, Shelley married Harriet Westbrook in Scotland.

On the 24th of March, 1814, he married her a second time in the Church of England, according to the marriage certificate printed in my article of January, 1860. This second marriage could scarcely have formed an incident in a series of 'long-continued unhappiness'.

In the beginning of April, 1814, Shelley and

Harriet were together on a visit to Mrs. B.,<sup>1</sup> at Bracknell. This lady and her family were of the few who constituted Shelley's most intimate friends. On the 18th of April, she wrote to Mr. Hogg:— 'Shelley is again a widower. His beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton.<sup>2</sup>

Up to this time, therefore, at least, Shelley and Harriet were together; and Mrs. B.'s letter shows that she had no idea of estrangement between them, still less of permanent separation.

I said in my article of January, 1860: 'There was no estrangement, no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after the second marriage, with the lady who was subsequently his second wife.'

When Shelley first saw this lady, she had just returned from a visit to some friends in Scotland; and when Mr. Hogg first saw her, she wore 'a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time'.<sup>3</sup> She could not have been long returned.

Mr. Hogg saw Mary Godwin for the first time on the first day of Lord Cochrane's trial. This was the 8th of June, 1814. He went with Shelley to Mr. Godwin's. 'We entered a room on the first floor. . . . William Godwin was not at home. . . . The door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called "Shelley!" A thrilling voice answered "Mary!" And he darted out of the room like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king.'<sup>3</sup>

Shelley's acquaintance with Miss Godwin must, therefore, have begun between the 18th of April and the 8th of June; much nearer, I apprehend, to

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. De Boinville.

<sup>2</sup> Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, p. 533. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, pp. 537-8. [T. L. P.]

the latter than the former, but I cannot verify the precise date.

On the 7th of July, 1814, Harriet wrote to a mutual friend, still living, a letter in which 'she expressed a confident belief that he must know where Shelley was, and entreating his assistance to induce him to return home'. She was not even then aware that Shelley had finally left her.

On the 28th of the same month, Shelley and Miss Godwin left England for Switzerland.

The interval between the Scotch and English marriages was two years and seven months. The interval between the second marriage and the departure for Switzerland, was four months and four days. In the estimate of probabilities, the space for voluntary separation is reduced by Mrs. B.'s letter of April 18, to three months and thirteen days; and by Harriet's letter of July 7, to twenty-one days. If, therefore, Shelley's family have any document which demonstrates Harriet's consent to the separation, it must prove the consent to have been given on one of these twenty-one days. I know, by my subsequent conversation with Harriet, of which the substance was given in my article of January, 1860, that she was not a consenting party; but as I have only my own evidence to that conversation, Mr. Garnett may choose not to believe me. Still, on other evidence than mine, there remain no more than three weeks within which, if at all, the 'amicable agreement' must have been concluded.

But again, if Shelley's family had any conclusive evidence on the subject, they must have had some clear idea of the date of the separation, and of the circumstances preceding it. That they had not, is manifest from Lady Shelley's statement, that 'towards the close of 1813, estrangements, which for some time

had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a crisis: separation ensued, and she<sup>1</sup> returned to her father's house.<sup>2</sup> Lady Shelley could not have written thus if she had known the date of the second marriage, or had even adverted to the letter of the 18th of April, 1814, which had been published by Mr. Hogg long before the production of her own volume.

I wrote the preceding note immediately after the appearance of Mr. Garnett's article; but I postponed its publication, in the hope of obtaining copies of the letters which were laid before Lord Eldon in 1817. These were nine letters from Shelley to Harriet, and one from Shelley to Miss Westbrook after Harriet's death. These letters were not filed; but they are thus alluded to in Miss Westbrook's affidavit, dated 10th January, 1817, of which I have procured a copy from the Record Office:—

Elizabeth Westbrook, of Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square, in the parish of Saint George, Hanover Square, in the county of Middlesex, spinster, maketh oath and saith, that she knows and is well acquainted with the handwriting of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Esquire, one of the defendants in this cause, having frequently seen him write; and this deponent saith that she hath looked upon certain paper writings now produced, and shown to her at the time of swearing this her affidavit, and marked respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; and this deponent saith that the female mentioned or referred to in the said letters, marked respectively 2, 4, 6, 9, under the name or designation of 'Mary', and in the said other letters by the character or description of the person with whom the said defendant had connected or associated himself, is Mary

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley Memorials*: 'Mrs. Shelley returned.'

<sup>2</sup> *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 64 5. [T. L. P.]

Godwin, in the pleadings of this cause named, whom the said defendant, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in the life-time of his said wife, and in or about the middle of the year 1814, took to cohabit with him, and hath ever since continued to cohabit, and still doth cohabit with ; and this deponent saith that she hath looked upon a certain other paper writing, produced and shown to this deponent now at the time of swearing this her affidavit, and marked 10 ; and this deponent saith that the same paper writing is of the handwriting of the said defendant, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and was addressed by him to this deponent, since the decease of her said sister, the late wife of the said Percy Bysshe Shelley. And this deponent saith that the person referred to in the said last mentioned letter as '*the Lady whose union with the said defendant this deponent might excusably regard as the cause of her Sister's Ruin*', is also the said Mary Godwin.

The rest of the affidavit relates to *Queen Mab*.

The words marked in italics could not possibly have been written by Shelley, if his connexion with Miss Godwin had not been formed till after a separation from Harriet by mutual consent.

In a second affidavit, dated 13th January, 1817, Miss Westbrook stated in substance the circumstances of the marriage, and that two children were the issue of it : that after the birth of the first child, Eliza Ianthe, and while her sister was pregnant with the second, Charles Bysshe, Percy Bysshe Shelley deserted his said wife, and cohabited with Mary Godwin ; and thereupon Harriet returned to the house of her father, with her eldest child, and soon afterwards the youngest child was born there ; that the children had always remained under the protection of Harriet's father, and that Harriet herself had resided under the same protection until

a short time previous to her death in December, 1816. It must be obvious that this statement could not have been made if the letters previously referred to had not borne it out; if, in short, they had not demonstrated, first, that the separation was not by mutual consent; and secondly, that it followed, not preceded, Shelley's first acquaintance with Mary Godwin. The rest of the affidavit related to the provision which Mr. Westbrook had made for the children.

Harriet suffered enough in her life to deserve that her memory should be respected. I have always said to all whom it might concern, that I would defend her, to the best of my ability, against all misrepresentations. Such are not necessary to Shelley's vindication. That is best permitted to rest, as I have already observed, on the grounds on which it was placed by himself.<sup>1</sup>

The *Quarterly Review* for October, 1861, has an article on Shelley's life and character, written in a tone of great fairness and impartiality, with an evident painstaking to weigh evidence and ascertain truth. There are two passages in the article, on which I wish to offer remarks, with reference solely to matters of fact.

Shelley's hallucinations, though not to be confounded with what is usually called insanity, are certainly not compatible with perfect soundness of mind. They were the result of an excessive sensibility, which, only a little more severely strained, would have overturned reason altogether. It has been said that the horror of his wife's death produced some such effect, and that for a time at least he was actually insane. Lady Shelley

<sup>1</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, January, 1860, p. 102. [T.L.P.] [See p. 65 of this volume.]

says nothing about this, and we have no explicit statement of the fact by any authoritative biographer. But it is not in itself improbable.—p. 323.<sup>1</sup>

It was not so, however. He had at that time taken his house at Marlow, where I was then living. He was residing in Bath, and I was looking after the fitting-up of the house and the laying out of the grounds. I had almost daily letters from him or Mary. He was the first to tell me of Harriet's death, asking whether I thought it would become him to interpose any delay before marrying Mary. I gave him my opinion that, as they were living together, the sooner they legalized their connexion the better. He acted on this opinion, and shortly after his marriage he came to me at Marlow. We went together to see the progress of his house and grounds. I recollect a little scene which took place on this occasion. There was on the lawn a very fine old wide-spreading holly. The gardener had cut it up into a bare pole, selling the lop for Christmas decorations. As soon as Shelley saw it, he asked the gardener, 'What had possessed him to ruin that beautiful tree?' The gardener said, he thought he had improved its appearance. Shelley said: 'It is impossible that you can be such a fool.' The culprit stood twiddling his thumbs along the seams of his trousers, receiving a fulminating denunciation, which

<sup>1</sup> This extract begins with the second sentence of a paragraph that extends for two pages of the *Quarterly Review*. It opens as follows:—

'The man,' says Coleridge, 'who mistakes his thoughts for persons and things is mad.' And Shelley's hallucinations, [&c. as above] . . . improbable, and there are not wanting in his own writings indication of such a calamity. We cannot tell how much of the description of the maniac in 'Julian and Maddalo' may not be taken from the history of his own mind. There are other poems which suggest the same observation.

ended in his peremptory dismissal. A better man was engaged, with several assistants, to make an extensive plantation of shrubs. Shelley stayed with me two or three days. I never saw him more calm and self-possessed. Nothing disturbed his serenity but the unfortunate holly. Subsequently, the feeling for Harriet's death grew into a deep and abiding sorrow: but it was not in the beginning that it was felt most strongly.

It is not merely as a work of art that the *Revolt of Islam* must be considered. It had made its first appearance under the title of *Laon and Cythna*, but *Laon and Cythna* was still more outspoken as to certain matters than the *Revolt of Islam*, and was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation, to appear<sup>1</sup> with alterations under its present name. There is something not quite worthy of Shelley in this transaction. On the one hand, merely prudential reasons, mere dread of public indignation, ought not to have induced him to conceal opinions<sup>2</sup> which for the interest of humanity he thought it his duty to promulgate. But those who knew most of Shelley will be least inclined to attribute to him such a motive as this. On the other hand, if good feeling induced him to abstain from printing what he knew must be painful<sup>3</sup> to the great majority of his countrymen, the second version should have been suppressed as well as the first.—pp. 314–15.

Shelley was not influenced by either of the motives supposed. Mr. Ollier positively refused to publish the poem as it was, and Shelley had no hope of another publisher. He for a long time refused to alter a line: but his friends finally prevailed on him

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*: 'reappear'.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* : 'opinions which he believed that, for the sake of humanity, it was his bounden duty at all risks to promulgate'.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* : 'painful and shocking to'.

to submit. Still he could not, or would not, sit down by himself to alter it, and the whole of the alterations were actually made in successive sittings of what I may call a literary committee. He contested the proposed alterations step by step: in the end, sometimes adopting, more frequently modifying, never originating, and always insisting that his poem was spoiled.

## LETTERS OF SHELLEY TO PEACOCK

SHELLEY wrote to me many letters from Italy—scarcely less than fifty. Of these, thirteen were published by Mrs. Shelley, and I now publish seventeen more. These are all I can find, and are perhaps all that contain anything of general interest.

I have from time to time thought of printing these letters, but I have always hesitated between two opposite disinclinations—on the one hand to omit the passages which show my friend's kind feelings towards me, and on the other, to bring myself personally before the public. But as these passages, especially those relating to *Nightmare Abbey* (in which he took to himself the character of Scythrop), are really illustrative of his affectionate, candid, and ingenuous character, I have finally determined not to suppress them.

We were for some time in the habit of numbering our letters. The two first in the following series were numbered 6 and 7, and the third 16. Of the letters preceding No. 6, Mrs. Shelley published four; and of those between Nos. 7 and 16 she published six, leaving a deficiency of three, of which I can give no account. No. 16 was the last numbered letter, so that I have no clue to my subsequent losses.

In his letter to me from Naples, dated January 26th, 1819 (published by Mrs. Shelley), he said:—‘In my accounts of pictures and things, I am more pleased to interest you than the many; and this is fortunate, because in the first place I have no idea of attempting the latter, and if I did attempt it, I should assuredly fail. • A perception of the beautiful characterizes those who differ from ordinary men, and those who can

perceive it would not buy enough to pay the printer. Besides, I keep no journal, and the only records of my voyage will be the letters I send you.'

The letter from Naples, dated February 25th, 1819, is the last I can find unpublished; and that from Rome, June 5th, 1819, published by Mrs. Shelley, was probably the last of his beautiful descriptive letters to me.

Of the cessation of his wanderings, and consequently of his descriptions, I have spoken in my last paper. There is something to the point in one of the following letters: 'Livorno, June, 1819.—I do not as usual send you an account of my journey, for I had neither the health nor the spirit to take notes.'

[The preceding paragraphs form Peacock's introduction to the sixteen letters, or portions of letters, which he published in *Fraser's Magazine* for March, 1860. Letter 27, of which he had already used the more important part in the *Memoirs*, he merely referred to, and did not print; but presumably he counted it as his seventeenth.

It will be noticed that he speaks of a total number of thirty letters, while the present edition contains thirty-four—all that are known to exist. Of the remaining four, two (Nos. 2 and 4) had been published separately by Shelley in 1817, with Mrs. Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland*; and two more (Nos. 1 and 3) are portions of letters which were also sent to Peacock during Shelley's second visit to Switzerland. These last form the 'some very little original matter, curiously obtained' which Peacock mentions, early in the first part of the *Memoirs*, as figuring in Middleton's *Shelley and his Writings*. How Middleton procured them is explained in the second part of the *Memoirs*, page 59 of this edition. The letters which Peacock speaks of above as having been numbered 6, 7, and 16 in Shelley's correspondence with him, are respectively Nos. 9, 10 and 17 of this edition.]

## LETTER I

*Hotel de Sécheron, Geneva, May 15th, 1816.*

AFTER a journey of ten days, we arrived at Geneva. The journey, like that of life, was variegated with intermingled rain and sunshine, though these many showers were to me, as you know, April showers, quickly passing away, and foretelling the calm brightness of summer.

The journey was in some respects exceedingly delightful, but the prudential considerations arising out of the necessity of preventing delay, and the continual attention to pecuniary disbursements, detract terribly from the pleasure of all travelling schemes.

You live by the shores of a tranquil stream, among low and woody hills. You live in a free country, where you may act without restraint, and possess that which you possess in security; and so long as the name of country and the selfish conceptions it includes shall subsist, England, I am persuaded, is the most free and the most refined.

Perhaps you have chosen wisely, but if I return and follow your example, it will be no subject of regret to me that I have seen other things. Surely there is much of bad and much of good, there is much to disgust and much to elevate, which he cannot have felt or known who has never passed the limits of his native land.

So long as man is such as he now is, the experience of which I speak will never teach him to despise the country of his birth—far otherwise, like Wordsworth, he will never know what love subsists between that and him until absence shall have made its beauty more heartfelt; our poets and our philosophers, our mountains and our lakes, the rural lanes and fields which are so especially our own, are ties which, until I become utterly senseless, can never be broken asunder.

These, and the memory of them, if I never should

return, these and the affections of the mind, with which, having been once united, [they]<sup>1</sup> are inseparable, will make the name of England dear to me for ever, even if I should permanently return to it no more.

But I suppose you did not pay the postage of this, expecting nothing but sentimental gossip, and I fear it will be long before I play the tourist properly. I will, however, tell you that to come to Geneva we crossed the Jura branch of the Alps.

The mere difficulties of horses, high bills, postilions, and cheating, lying *aubergistes*, you can easily conceive; fill up that part of the picture according to your own experience, and it cannot fail to resemble.

The mountains of Jura exhibit scenery of wonderful sublimity. Pine forests of impenetrable thickness, and untrodden, nay, inaccessible expanse, spreading on every side. Sometimes, descending, they follow the route into the valleys, clothing the precipitous rocks, and struggling with knotted roots between the most barren clefts. Sometimes the road winds high into the regions of frost, and there these forests become scattered, and loaded with snow.

The trees in these regions are incredibly large, and stand in scattered clumps over the white wilderness. Never was scene more utterly desolate than that which we passed on the evening of our last day's journey.

The natural silence of that uninhabited desert contrasted strangely with the voices of the people who conducted us, for it was necessary in this part of the mountain to take a number of persons, who should assist the horses to force the chaise through the snow, and prevent it from falling down the precipice.

We are now at Geneva, where, or in the neighbourhood, we shall remain probably until the autumn. I may return in a fortnight or three weeks, to attend to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Buxton Forman suggests 'we' before 'are', which is without a subject in Middleton's text; I follow Rhys, however, in the opinion that 'they' is the word omitted.

the last exertions which L——<sup>1</sup> is to make for the settlement of my affairs; of course I shall then see you; in the meantime it will interest me to hear all that you have to tell of yourself.

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER 2

MEILLERIE, CLARENS, CHILLON, VEVAI, LAUSANNE.

*Montalegre, near Coligni, Geneva, July 12th, [1816.]*

IT is nearly a fortnight since I have returned from Vevai. This journey has been on every account delightful, but most especially, because then I first knew the divine beauty of Rousseau's imagination, as it exhibits itself in *Julie*. It is inconceivable what an enchantment the scene itself lends to those delineations, from which its own most touching charm arises. But I will give you an abstract of our voyage, which lasted eight days, and if you have a map of Switzerland, you can follow me.

We left Montalegre at half-past two on the 23rd of June. The lake was calm, and after three hours of rowing we arrived at Hermance, a beautiful little village, containing a ruined tower, built, the villagers say, by Julius Caesar. There were three other towers similar to it, which the Genevese destroyed for their own fortifications in 1560. We got into the tower by a kind of window. The walls are immensely solid, and the stone of which it is built so hard, that it yet retained the mark of chisels. The boatmen said, that this tower was once three times higher than it is now. There are two staircases in the thickness of the walls, one of which is entirely demolished, and the other half ruined, and only accessible by a ladder. The town itself, now an inconsiderable village inhabited by a few fishermen, was built by a queen of Burgundy, and reduced to its present state by the inhabitants of Berne, who burnt and ravaged everything they could find.

<sup>1</sup> Longdill, Shelley's solicitor, I presume. [H. B. F.]

Leaving Hermance, we arrived at sunset at the village of Nerni. After looking at our lodgings, which were gloomy and dirty, we walked out by the side of the lake. It was beautiful to see the vast expanse of these purple and misty waters broken by the craggy islets near to its slant and 'beached margin'. There were many fish sporting in the lake, and multitudes were collected close to the rocks to catch the flies which inhabited them.

On returning to the village, we sat on a wall beside the lake, looking at some children who were playing at a game like ninepins. The children here appeared in an extraordinary way deformed and diseased. Most of them were crooked, and with enlarged throats; but one little boy had such exquisite grace in his mien and motions, as I never before saw equalled in a child. His countenance was beautiful for the expression with which it overflowed. There was a mixture of pride and gentleness in his eyes and lips, the indications of sensibility, which his education will probably pervert to misery or seduce to crime; but there was more of gentleness than of pride, and it seemed that the pride was tamed from its original wildness by the habitual exercise of milder feelings. My companion gave him a piece of money, which he took without speaking, with a sweet smile of easy thankfulness, and then with an unembarrassed air turned to his play. All this might scarcely be; but the imagination surely could not forbear to breathe into the most inanimate forms, some likeness of its own visions, on such a serene and glowing evening, in this remote and romantic village, beside the calm lake that bore us hither.

On returning to our inn, we found that the servant had arranged our rooms, and deprived them of the greater portion of their former disconsolate appearance. They reminded my companion of Greece: it was five years, he said, since he had slept in such beds. The influence of the recollections excited by this circumstance on our conversation gradually faded, and I retired to rest with no unpleasant sensations, thinking of our

journey to-morrow, and of the pleasure of recounting the little adventures of it when we return.

The next morning we passed Yvoire, a scattered village with an ancient castle, whose houses are interspersed with trees, and which stands at a little distance from Nerni, on the promontory which bounds a deep bay, some miles in extent. So soon as we arrived at this promontory, the lake began to assume an aspect of wilder magnificence. The mountains of Savoy, whose summits were bright with snow, descended in broken slopes to the lake: on high, the rocks were dark with pine forests, which become deeper and more immense, until the ice and snow mingle with the points of naked rock that pierce the blue air; but below, groves of walnut, chestnut, and oak, with openings of lawny fields, attested the milder climate.

As soon as we had passed the opposite promontory, we saw the river Drance, which descends from between a chasm in the mountains, and makes a plain near the lake, intersected by its divided streams. Thousands of *besolets*, beautiful water-birds, like sea-gulls, but smaller, with purple on their backs, take their station on the shallows where its waters mingle with the lake. As we approached Evian, the mountains descended more precipitously to the lake, and masses of intermingled wood and rock overhung its shining spire.

We arrived at this town about seven o'clock, after a day which involved more rapid changes of atmosphere than I ever recollect to have observed before. The morning was cold and wet; then an easterly wind, and the clouds hard and high; then thunder showers, and wind shifting to every quarter; then a warm blast from the south, and summer clouds hanging over the peaks, with bright bluesky between. About half an hour after we had arrived at Evian, a few flashes of lightning came from a dark cloud, directly overhead, and continued after the cloud had dispersed. ‘*Diespiter per pura tonantes egit equos*:’ a phenomenon which certainly had no influence on me, corresponding with that which it produced on Horace.

The appearance of the inhabitants of Evian is more wretched, diseased and poor, than I ever recollect to have seen. The contrast indeed between the subjects of the King of Sardinia and the citizens of the independent republics of Switzerland, affords a powerful illustration of the blighting mischiefs of despotism, within the space of a few miles. They have mineral waters here, *eaux savonneuses*, they call them. In the evening we had some difficulty about our passports, but so soon as the syndic heard my companion's rank and name, he apologized for the circumstance. The inn was good. During our voyage, on the distant height of a hill, covered with pine-forests, we saw a ruined castle, which reminded me of those on the Rhine.

We left Evian on the following morning, with a wind of such violence as to permit but one sail to be carried. The waves also were exceedingly high, and our boat so heavily laden, that there appeared to be some danger. We arrived, however, safe at Meillerie, after passing with great speed mighty forests which overhung the lake, and lawns of exquisite verdure, and mountains with bare and icy points, which rose immediately from the summit of the rocks, whose bases were echoing to the waves.

We here heard that the Empress Maria Louisa had slept at Meillerie—before the present inn was built, and when the accommodations were those of the most wretched village—in remembrance of St. Preux. How beautiful it is to find that the common sentiments of human nature can attach themselves to those who are the most removed from its duties and its enjoyments, when Genius pleads for their admission at the gate of Power. To own them was becoming in the Empress, and confirms the affectionate praise contained in the regret of a great and enlightened nation. A Bourbon dared not even to have remembered Rousseau. She owed this power to that democracy which her husband's dynasty outraged, and of which it was, however, in some sort, the representative among the nations of the earth. This little incident shows at once how unfit and how

impossible it is for the ancient system of opinions, or for any power built upon a conspiracy to revive them, permanently to subsist among mankind. We dined there, and had some honey, the best I have ever tasted, the very essence of the mountain flowers, and as fragrant. Probably the village derives its name from this production. Meillerie is the well-known scene of St. Preux's visionary exile; but Meillerie is indeed enchanted ground, were Rousseau no magician. Groves of pine, chestnut, and walnut overshadow it; magnificent and unbounded forests to which England affords no parallel. In the midst of these woods are dells of lawny expanse, inconceivably verdant, adorned with a thousand of the rarest flowers, and odorous with thyme.

The lake appeared somewhat calmer as we left Meillerie, sailing close to the banks, whose magnificence augmented with the turn of every promontory. But we congratulated ourselves too soon: the wind gradually increased in violence, until it blew tremendously; and, as it came from the remotest extremity of the lake, produced waves of a frightful height, and covered the whole surface with a chaos of foam. One of our boatmen, who was a dreadfully stupid fellow, persisted in holding the sail at a time when the boat was on the point of being driven under water by the hurricane. On discovering his error, he let it entirely go, and the boat for a moment refused to obey the helm; in addition, the rudder was so broken as to render the management of it very difficult; one wave fell in, and then another. My companion, an excellent swimmer, took off his coat, I did the same, and we sat with our arms crossed, every instant expecting to be swamped. The sail was, however, again held, the boat obeyed the helm, and still in imminent peril from the immensity of the waves, we arrived in a few minutes at a sheltered port, in the village of St. Gingoux.

I felt in this near prospect of death a mixture of sensations, among which terror entered, though but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful

had I been alone ; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation, when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine. When we arrived at St. Gingoux, the inhabitants, who stood on the shore, unaccustomed to see a vessel as frail as ours, and fearing to venture at all on such a sea, exchanged looks of wonder and congratulation with our boatmen, who, as well as ourselves, were well pleased to set foot on shore.

St. Gingoux is even more beautiful than Meillerie ; the mountains are higher, and their loftiest points of elevation descend more abruptly to the lake. On high, the aerial summits still cherish great depths of snow in their ravines, and in the paths of their unseen torrents. One of the highest of these is called Roche de St. Julien, beneath whose pinnacles the forests become deeper and more extensive ; the chestnut gives a peculiarity to the scene, which is most beautiful, and will make a picture in my memory, distinct from all other mountain scenes which I have ever before visited.

As we arrived here early, we took a *voiture* to visit the mouth of the Rhone. We went between the mountains and the lake, under groves of mighty chestnut trees, beside perpetual streams, which are nourished by the snows above, and form stalactites on the rocks, over which they fall. We saw an immense chestnut tree, which had been overthrown by the hurricane of the morning. The place where the Rhone joins the lake was marked by a line of tremendous breakers ; the river is as rapid as when it leaves the lake, but is muddy and dark. We went about a league farther on the road to La Valais, and stopped at a castle called La Tour de Bouverie, which seems to be the frontier of Switzerland and Savoy, as we were asked for our passports, on the supposition of our proceeding to Italy.

On one side of the road was the immense Roche de St. Julien, which overhung it ; through the gateway of the castle we saw the snowy mountains of La Valais, clothed in clouds, and, on the other side, was the

willowy plain of the Rhone, in a character of striking contrast with the rest of the scene, bounded by the dark mountains that overhang Clarens, Vevai, and the lake that rolls between. In the midst of the plain rises a little isolated hill, on which the white spire of a church peeps from among the tufted chestnut woods. We returned to St. Gingoux before sunset, and I passed the evening in reading *Julie*.

As my companion rises late, I had time before breakfast, on the ensuing morning, to hunt the waterfalls of the river that fall into the lake at St. Gingoux. The stream is indeed, from the declivity over which it falls, only a succession of waterfalls, which roar over the rocks with a perpetual sound, and suspend their unceasing spray on the leaves and flowers that overhang and adorn its savage banks. The path that conducted along this river sometimes avoided the precipices of its shores, by leading through meadows; sometimes threaded the base of the perpendicular and caverned rocks. I gathered in these meadows a nosegay of such flowers as I never saw in England, and which I thought more beautiful for that rarity.

On my return, after breakfast, we sailed for Clarens, determining first to see the three mouths of the Rhone, and then the Castle of Chillon; the day was fine, and the water calm. We passed from the blue waters of the lake over the stream of the Rhone, which is rapid even at a great distance from its confluence with the lake; the turbid waters mixed with those of the lake, but mixed with them unwillingly. (*See Nouvelle Héloïse, Lettre 17, Part. 4*). I read *Julie* all day; an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility. Meillerie, the Castle of Chillon, Clarens, the mountains of La Valais and Savoy, present themselves to the imagination as monuments of things that were once familiar, and of beings that were once dear to it. They were created indeed by one mind, but a mind so powerfully bright as to cast a shade of falsehood on the records that are called reality.

We passed on to the Castle of Chillon, and visited its dungeons and towers. These prisons are excavated below the lake ; the principal dungeon is supported by seven columns, whose branching capitals support the roof. Close to the very walls, the lake is eight hundred feet deep ; iron rings are fastened to these columns, and on them were engraven a multitude of names, partly those of visitors, and partly doubtless of the prisoners, of whom now no memory remains, and who thus beguiled a solitude which they have long ceased to feel. One date was as ancient as 1670. At the commencement of the Reformation, and indeed long after that period, this dungeon was the receptacle of those who shook, or who denied the system of idolatry, from the effects of which mankind is even now slowly emerging.

Close to this long and lofty dungeon was a narrow cell, and beyond it one larger and far more lofty and dark, supported upon two unornamented arches. Across one of these arches was a beam, now black and rotten, on which prisoners were hung in secret. I never saw a monument more terrible of that cold and inhuman tyranny, which it has been the delight of man to exercise over man. It was indeed one of those many tremendous fulfilments which render the ‘pernicies *humani generis*’ of the great Tacitus so solemn and irrefragable a prophecy. The gendarme, who conducted us over this castle, told us that there was an opening to the lake, by means of a secret spring, connected with which the whole dungeon might be filled with water before the prisoners could possibly escape !

We proceeded with a contrary wind to Clarens against a heavy swell. I never felt more strongly than on landing at Clarens, that the spirit of old times had deserted its once cherished habitation. A thousand times, thought I, have Julia and St. Preux walked on this terraced road, looking towards these mountains which I now behold ; nay, treading on the ground where I now tread. From the window of our lodging our landlady pointed out ‘le bosquet de Julie’. At

least the inhabitants of this village are impressed with an idea, that the persons of that romance had actual existence. In the evening we walked thither. It is, indeed, Julia's wood. The hay was making under the trees ; the trees themselves were aged, but vigorous, and interspersed with younger ones, which are destined to be their successors, and in future years, when we are dead, to afford a shade to future worshippers of nature, who love the memory of that tenderness and peace of which this was the imaginary abode. We walked forward among the vineyards, whose narrow terraces overlook this affecting scene. Why did the cold maxims of the world compel me at this moment to repress the tears of melancholy transport which it would have been so sweet to indulge, immeasurably, even until the darkness of night had swallowed up the objects which excited them.

I forgot to remark, what indeed my companion remarked to me, that our danger from the storm took place precisely in the spot where Julie and her lover were nearly overset, and where St. Preux was tempted to plunge with her into the lake.

On the following day we went to see the castle of Clarens, a square strong house, with very few windows, surrounded by a double terrace that overlooks the valley, or rather the plain of Clarens. The road which conducted to it wound up the steep ascent through woods of walnut and chestnut. We gathered roses on the terrace, in the feeling that they might be the posterity of some planted by Julie's hand. We sent their dead and withered leaves to the absent.

We went again to 'the bosquet de Julie', and found that the precise spot was now utterly obliterated, and a heap of stones marked the place where the little chapel had once stood. Whilst we were execrating the author of this brutal folly, our guide informed us that the land belonged to the convent of St. Bernard, and that this outrage had been committed by their orders. I knew before, that if avarice could harden the hearts

of men, a system of prescriptive religion has an influence far more inimical to natural sensibility. I know that an isolated man is sometimes restrained by shame from outraging the venerable feelings arising out of the memory of genius, which once made nature even lovelier than itself; but associated man holds it as the very sacrament of his union to forswear all delicacy, all benevolence, all remorse; all that is true, or tender, or sublime.

We sailed from Clarens to Vevai. Vevai is a town more beautiful in its simplicity than any I have ever seen. Its market-place, a spacious square interspersed with trees, looks directly upon the mountains of Savoy and La Valais, the lake, and the valley of the Rhone. It was at Vevai that Rousseau conceived the design of Julie.

From Vevai we came to Ouchy, a village near Lausanne. The coasts of the Pays de Vaud, though full of villages and vineyards, present an aspect of tranquillity and peculiar beauty which well compensates for the solitude which I am accustomed to admire. The hills are very high and rocky, crowned and interspersed with woods. Waterfalls echo from the cliffs, and shine afar. In one place we saw the traces of two rocks of immense size, which had fallen from the mountain behind. One of these lodged in a room where a young woman was sleeping, without injuring her. The vineyards were utterly destroyed in its path, and the earth torn up.

The rain detained us two days at Ouchy. We, however, visited Lausanne, and saw Gibbon's house. We were shown the decayed summer-house where he finished his History, and the old acacias on the terrace, from which he saw Mont Blanc, after having written the last sentence. There is something grand and even touching in the regret which he expresses at the completion of his task. It was conceived amid the ruins of the Capitol. The sudden departure of his cherished and accustomed toil must have left him, like the death of a dear friend, sad and solitary.

My companion gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him. I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau; the contemplation of whose imperishable creations had left no vacancy in my heart for mortal things. Gibbon had a cold and unimpassioned spirit. I never felt more inclination to rail at the prejudices which cling to such a thing, than now that Julie and Clarens, Lausanne and the Roman Empire, compelled me to a contrast between Rousseau and Gibbon.

When we returned, in the only interval of sunshine during the day, I walked on the pier which the lake was lashing with its waves. A rainbow spanned the lake, or rather rested one extremity of its arch upon the water, and the other at the foot of the mountains of Savoy. Some white houses, I know not if they were those of Meillerie, shone through the yellow fire.

On Saturday the 30th of June we quitted Ouchy, and after two days of pleasant sailing arrived on Sunday evening at Montalegre.

### LETTER 3

*Geneva, July 17th, 1816.*

My opinion of turning to one spot of earth and calling it our home, and of the excellencies and usefulness of the sentiments arising out of this attachment, has at length produced in me the resolution of acquiring this possession.

You are the only man who has sufficient regard for me to take an interest in the fulfilment of this design, and whose tastes conform sufficiently to mine to engage me to confide the execution of it to your discretion.

I do not trouble you with apologies for giving you this commission. I require only rural exertions, walks, and circuitous wanderings, some slight negotiations about the letting of a house—the superintendence of a disorderly garden, some palings to be mended, some books to be removed and set up.

I wish you would get all my books and all my furniture from Bishopgate, and all other effects appertaining to me. I have written to . . . to secure all that belongs to me there to you. I have written also to L— to give up possession of the house on the third of August.

When you have possessed yourself of all my affairs, I wish you to look out for a home for me and Mary and William, and the kitten, who is now *en pension*. I wish you to get an unfurnished house, with as good a garden as may be, near Windsor Forest, and take a lease of it for fourteen or twenty-one years. The house must not be too small. I wish the situation to resemble as nearly as possible that of Bishopgate, and should think that Sunning Hill, or Winkfield Plain, or the neighbourhood of Virginia Water would afford some possibilities.

Houses are now exceedingly cheap and plentiful; but I entrust the whole of this affair entirely to your own discretion.

I shall hear from you of course, as to what you have done on this subject, and shall not delay to remit you whatever expenses you may find it necessary to incur. Perhaps, however, you had better sell the useless part of the Bishopgate furniture—I mean those odious curtains, &c.

Will you write to L— to tell him that you are authorized on my part to go over the inventory with Lady L—'s people on the third of August, if they please, and to make whatever arrangements may be requisite. I should be content with the Bishopgate house, dear as it is, if Lady L— would make the sale of it a post obit transaction. I merely suggest this, that if you see any possibility of proposing such an arrangement with effect, you might do it.

My present intention is to return to England, and to make that most excellent of nations my perpetual resting place. I think it is extremely probable that we shall return next spring—perhaps before, perhaps after, but certainly we shall return.

On the motives and on the consequences of this

journey, I reserve much explanation for some future winter walk or summer expedition. This much alone is certain, that before we return we shall have seen, and felt, and heard, a multiplicity of things which will haunt our talk and make us a little better worth knowing than we were before our departure.

If possible, we think of descending the Danube in a boat, of visiting Constantinople and Athens, then Rome and the Tuscan cities, and returning by the south of France, always following great rivers. The Danube, the Po, the Rhone, and the Garonne; rivers are not like roads, the work of the hands of man; they imitate mind, which wanders at will over pathless deserts, and flows through nature's loveliest recesses, which are inaccessible to anything besides. They have the viler advantage also of affording a cheaper mode of conveyance.

This eastern scheme is one which has just seized on our imaginations. I fear that the detail of execution will destroy it, as all other wild and beautiful visions; but at all events you will hear from us wherever we are, and to whatever adventures destiny enforces us.

Tell me in return all English news. What has become of my poem?<sup>1</sup> I hope it has already sheltered itself in the bosom of its mother, Oblivion, from whose embraces no one could have been so barbarous as to tear it except me.

Tell me of the political state of England. Its literature, of which when I speak Coleridge is in my thoughts; —yourself, lastly your own employments, your historical labours.

I had written thus far when your letter to Mary dated the 8th arrived. What you say of Bishopgate of course modifies that part of this letter which relates to it. I confess I did not learn the destined ruin without some pain, but it is well for me perhaps that a situation requiring so large an expense should be placed beyond our hopes.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably *Alastor*. [H. B. F.]

You must shelter my roofless Penates, dedicate some new temple to them, and perform the functions of a priest in my absence. They are innocent deities, and their worship neither sanguinary nor absurd.

Leave Mammon and Jehovah to those who delight in wickedness and slavery—their altars are stained with blood, or polluted with gold, the price of blood. But the shrines of the Penates are good wood fires, or window frames intertwined with creeping plants; their hymns are the purring of kittens, the hissing of kettles; the long talks over the past and dead, the laugh of children; the warm wind of summer filling the quiet house, and the pelting storm of winter struggling in vain for entrance. In talking of the Penates, will you not liken me to Julius Caesar dedicating a temple to Liberty?

As I have said in the former part of my letter, I trust entirely to your discretion on the subject of a house. Certainly the Forest engages my preference, because of the sylvan nature of the place, and the beasts with which it is filled. But I am not insensible to the beauties of the Thames, and any extraordinary eligibility of situation you mention in your letter would overbalance our habitual affection for the neighbourhood of Bishopgate.

Its proximity to the spot you have chosen is an argument with us in favour of the Thames. Recollect, however, we are now choosing a fixed, settled, eternal home, and as such its internal qualities will affect us more constantly than those which consist in the surrounding scenery, which whatever it may be at first, will shortly be no more than the colours with which our own habits shall invest it.

I am glad that circumstances do not permit the choice to be my own. I shall abide by yours as others abide by the necessity of their birth.

. . . . .

## LETTER 4

ST. MARTIN, SERVOZ, CHAMOUNI, MONTANVERT,  
MONT BLANC.

*Hôtel de Londres, Chamouni, July 22nd, 1816.*

WHILST you, my friend, are engaged in securing a home for us, we are wandering in search of recollections to embellish it. I do not err in conceiving that you are interested in details of all that is majestic or beautiful in nature; but how shall I describe to you the scenes by which I am now surrounded? To exhaust the epithets which express the astonishment and the admiration—the very excess of satisfied astonishment, where expectation scarcely acknowledged any boundary, is this to impress upon your mind the images which fill mine now, even till it overflow? I too have read the raptures of travellers; I will be warned by their example; I will simply detail to you all that I can relate, or all that, if related, would enable you to conceive of what we have done or seen since the morning of the 20th, when we left Geneva.

We commenced our intended journey to Chamouni at half-past eight in the morning. We passed through the champain country, which extends from Mont Salève to the base of the higher Alps. The country is sufficiently fertile, covered with corn-fields and orchards, and intersected by sudden acclivities with flat summits. The day was cloudless and excessively hot, the Alps were perpetually in sight, and as we advanced, the mountains, which form their outskirts, closed in around us. We passed a bridge over a stream, which discharges itself into the Arve. The Arve itself, much swollen by the rains, flows constantly to the right of the road.

As we approached Bonneville through an avenue composed of a beautiful species of drooping poplar, we observed that the corn-fields on each side were covered with inundation. Bonneville is a neat little town, with no conspicuous peculiarity, except the white towers of

the prison, an extensive building overlooking the town. At Bonneville the Alps commence, one of which, clothed by forests, rises almost immediately from the opposite bank of the Arve.

From Bonneville to Cluses the road conducts through a spacious and fertile plain, surrounded on all sides by mountains, covered like those of Meillerie with forests of intermingled pine and chestnut. At Cluses the road turns suddenly to the right, following the Arve along the chasm, which it seems to have hollowed for itself among the perpendicular mountains. The scene assumes here a more savage and colossal character: the valley becomes narrow, affording no more space than is sufficient for the river and the road. The pines descend to the banks, imitating, with their irregular spires, the pyramidal crags, which lift themselves far above the regions of forest into the deep azure of the sky, and among the white dazzling clouds. The scene, at the distance of half a mile from Cluses, differs from that of Matlock in little else than in the immensity of its proportions, and in its untameable inaccessible solitude, inhabited only by the goats which we saw browsing on the rocks.

Near Maglans, within a league of each other, we saw two waterfalls. They were no more than mountain rivulets, but the height from which they fell, at least of twelve hundred feet, made them assume a character inconsistent with the smallness of their stream. The first fell from the overhanging brow of a black precipice on an enormous rock, precisely resembling some colossal Egyptian statue of a female deity. It struck the head of the visionary image, and gracefully dividing there, fell from it in folds of foam more like to cloud than water, imitating a veil of the most exquisite woof. It then united, concealing the lower part of the statue, and hiding itself in a winding of its channel, burst into a deeper fall, and crossed our route in its path towards the Arve.

The other waterfall was more continuous and larger. The violence with which it fell made it look more

like some shape which an exhalation had assumed, than like water, for it streamed beyond the mountain, which appeared dark behind it, as it might have appeared behind an evanescent cloud.

The character of the scenery continued the same until we arrived at St. Martin (called in the maps Sallanches), the mountains perpetually becoming more elevated, exhibiting at every turn of the road more craggy summits, loftier and wider extent of forests, darker and more deep recesses.

The following morning we proceeded from St. Martin, on mules, to Chamouni, accompanied by two guides. We proceeded, as we had done the preceding day, along the valley of the Arve, a valley surrounded on all sides by immense mountains, whose rugged precipices are intermixed on high with dazzling snow. Their bases were still covered with the eternal forests, which perpetually grew darker and more profound as we approached the inner regions of the mountains.

On arriving at a small village at the distance of a league from St. Martin, we dismounted from our mules, and were conducted by our guides to view a cascade. We beheld an immense body of water fall two hundred and fifty feet, dashing from rock to rock, and casting a spray which formed a mist around it, in the midst of which hung a multitude of sunbows, which faded or became unspeakably vivid, as the inconstant sun shone through the clouds. When we approached near to it, the rain of the spray reached us, and our clothes were wetted by the quick-falling but minute particles of water. The cataract fell from above into a deep craggy chasm at our feet, where, changing its character to that of a mountain stream, it pursued its course towards the Arve, roaring over the rocks that impeded its progress.

As we proceeded, our route still lay through the valley, or rather, as it had now become, the vast ravine, which is at once the couch and the creation of the terrible Arve. We ascended, winding between mountains, whose immensity staggers the imagination. We

crossed the path of a torrent, which three days since had descended from the thawing snow, and torn the road away.

We dined at Servoz, a little village, where there are lead and copper mines, and where we saw a cabinet of natural curiosities, like those of Keswick and Bethgelert. We saw in this cabinet some chamois' horns, and the horns of an exceedingly rare animal called the bouquetin, which inhabits the deserts of snow to the south of Mount Blanc : it is an animal of the stag kind ; its horns weigh, at least, twenty-seven English pounds. It is inconceivable how so small an animal could support so inordinate a weight. The horns are of a very peculiar conformation, being broad, massy, and pointed at the ends, and surrounded with a number of rings, which are supposed to afford an indication of its age : there were seventeen rings on the largest of these horns.

From Servoz three leagues remain to Chamouni.—Mont Blanc was before us—the Alps, with their innumerable glaciers on high all around, closing in the complicated windings of the single vale—forests inexpressibly beautiful, but majestic in their beauty—intermingled beech and pine, and oak, overshadowed our road, or receded, whilst lawns of such verdure as I have never seen before, occupied these openings, and gradually became darker in their recesses. Mont Blanc was before us, but it was covered with cloud ; its base, furrowed with dreadful gaps, was seen above. Pinnacles of snow intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc, shone through the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew—I never imagined—what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder, not unallied to madness. And remember this was all one scene, it all pressed home to our regard and our imagination. Though it embraced a vast extent of space, the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path ; the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines, and black with its depth below,

so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve, which rolled through it, could not be heard above—all was as much our own, as if we had been the creators of such impressions in the minds of others as now occupied our own. Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest.

As we entered the valley of Chamouni (which in fact, may be considered as a continuation of those which we have followed from Bonneville and Cluses), clouds hung upon the mountains at the distance perhaps of 6,000 feet from the earth, but so as effectually to conceal, not only Mont Blanc, but the other *aiguilles*, as they call them here, attached and subordinate to it. We were travelling along the valley, when suddenly we heard a sound as of the burst of smothered thunder rolling above ; yet there was something earthly in the sound, that told us it could not be thunder. Our guide hastily pointed out to us a part of the mountain opposite, from whence the sound came. It was an avalanche. We saw the smoke of its path among the rocks, and continued to hear at intervals the bursting of its fall. It fell on the bed of a torrent, which it displaced, and presently we saw its tawny-coloured waters also spread themselves over the ravine, which was their couch.

We did not, as we intended, visit the *Glacier des Bossons* to-day, although it descends within a few minutes' walk of the road, wishing to survey it at least when unfatigued. We saw this glacier, which comes close to the fertile plain, as we passed. Its surface was broken into a thousand unaccountable figures ; conical and pyramidal crystallizations, more than fifty feet in height, rise from its surface, and precipices of ice, of dazzling splendour, overhang the woods and meadows of the vale. This glacier winds upwards from the valley, until it joins the masses of frost from which it was produced above, winding through its own ravine like a bright belt flung over the black region of pines. There is more in all these scenes than mere magnitude of proportion : there is a majesty of outline ; there is an awful grace in

the very colours which invest these wonderful shapes —a charm which is peculiar to them, quite distinct even from the reality of their unutterable greatness.

*July 24.*

Yesterday morning we went to the source of the Arveiron. It is about a league from this village ; the river rolls forth impetuously from an arch of ice, and spreads itself in many streams over a vast space of the valley, ravaged and laid bare by its inundations. The glacier by which its waters are nourished, overhangs this cavern and the plain, and the forests of pine which surround it, with terrible precipices of solid ice. On the other side rises the immense glacier of Montanvert, fifty miles in extent, occupying a chasm among mountains of inconceivable height, and of forms so pointed and abrupt, that they seem to pierce the sky. From this glacier we saw, as we sat on a rock, close to one of the streams of the Arveiron, masses of ice detach themselves from on high, and rush with a loud dull noise into the vale. The violence of their fall turned them into powder, which flowed over the rocks in imitation of waterfalls, whose ravines they usurped and filled.

In the evening, I went with Ducrée, my guide, the only tolerable person I have seen in this country, to visit the glacier of Bossons. This glacier, like that of Montanvert, comes close to the vale, overhanging the green meadows and the dark woods with the dazzling whiteness of its precipices and pinnacles, which are like spires of radiant crystal, covered with a net-work of frosted silver. These glaciers flow perpetually into the valley, ravaging in their slow but irresistible progress the pastures and the forests which surround them, performing a work of desolation in ages, which a river of lava might accomplish in an hour, but far more irretrievably ; for where the ice has once descended, the hardiest plant refuses to grow ; if even, as in some extraordinary instances, it should recede after its progress has once commenced. The glaciers perpetually

move onward, at the rate of a foot each day, with a motion that commences at the spot where, on the boundaries of perpetual congelation, they are produced by the freezing of the waters which arise from the partial melting of the eternal snows. They drag with them, from the regions whence they derive their origin, all the ruins of the mountain, enormous rocks, and immense accumulations of sand and stones. These are driven onwards by the irresistible stream of solid ice ; and when they arrive at a declivity of the mountain, sufficiently rapid, roll down, scattering ruin. I saw one of these rocks which had descended in the spring (winter here is the season of silence and safety), which measured forty feet in every direction.

The verge of a glacier, like that of Bossons, presents the most vivid image of desolation that it is possible to conceive. No one dares to approach it ; for the enormous pinnacles of ice which perpetually fall, are perpetually reproduced. The pines of the forest, which bound it at one extremity, are overthrown and shattered, to a wide extent, at its base. There is something inexpressibly dreadful in the aspect of the few branchless trunks, which, nearest to the ice rifts, still stand in the uprooted soil. The meadows perish, overwhelmed with sand and stones. Within this last year, these glaciers have advanced three hundred feet into the valley. Saussure, the naturalist, says, that they have their periods of increase and decay : the people of the country hold an opinion entirely different ; but as I judge, more probable. It is agreed by all, that the snow on the summit of Mont Blanc and the neighbouring mountains perpetually augments, and that ice, in the form of glaciers, subsists without melting in the valley of Chamouni during its transient and variable summer. If the snow which produces this glacier must augment, and the heat of the valley is no obstacle to the perpetual existence of such masses of ice as have already descended into it, the consequence is obvious ; the glaciers must augment and will subsist, at least until they have overflowed this vale,

I will not pursue Buffon's sublime but gloomy theory — that this globe which we inhabit will, at some future period, be changed into a mass of frost by the encroachments of the polar ice, and of that produced on the most elevated points of the earth. Do you, who assert the supremacy of Ahriman, imagine him throned among these desolating snows, among these palaces of death and frost, so sculptured in this their terrible magnificence by the adamantine hand of necessity, and that he casts around him, as the first essays of his final usurpation, avalanches, torrents, rocks, and thunders, and above all these deadly glaciers, at once the proof and symbols of his reign;—add to this, the degradation of the human species — who, in these regions, are half deformed or idiotic, and most of whom are deprived of anything that can excite interest or admiration. This is part of the subject more mournful and less sublime; but such as neither the poet nor the philosopher should disdain to regard.

This morning we departed, on the promise of a fine day, to visit the glacier of Montanvert. In that part where it fills a slanting valley, it is called the Sea of Ice. This valley is 950 toises, or 7,600 feet, above the level of the sea. We had not proceeded far before the rain began to fall, but we persisted until we had accomplished more than half of our journey, when we returned, wet through.

*Chamouni, July 25th.*

We have returned from visiting the glacier of Montanvert, or as it is called the Sea of Ice, a scene in truth of dizzying wonder. The path that winds to it along the side of a mountain, now clothed with pines, now intersected with snowy hollows, is wide and steep. The cabin of Montanvert is three leagues from Chamouni, half of which distance is performed on mules, not so surefooted but that on the first day the one which I rode fell in what the guides call a *mauvais pas*, so that I narrowly escaped being precipitated down the mountain. We passed over a hollow covered with snow,

down which vast stones are accustomed to roll. One had fallen the preceding day, a little time after we had returned: our guides desired us to pass quickly, for it is said that sometimes the least sound will accelerate their descent. We arrived at Montanvert, however, safe.

On all sides precipitous mountains, the abodes of unrelenting frost, surround this vale: their sides are banked up with ice and snow, broken, heaped high, and exhibiting terrific chasms. The summits are sharp and naked pinnacles, whose overhanging steepness will not even permit snow to rest upon them. Lines of dazzling ice occupy here and there their perpendicular rifts, and shine through the driving vapours with inexpressible brilliance: they pierce the clouds like things not belonging to this earth. The vale itself is filled with a mass of undulating ice, and has an ascent sufficiently gradual even to the remotest abysses of these horrible deserts. It is only half a league (about two miles) in breadth, and seems much less. It exhibits an appearance as if frost had suddenly bound up the waves and whirlpools of a mighty torrent. We walked some distance upon its surface. The waves are elevated about twelve or fifteen feet from the surface of the mass, which is intersected by long gaps of unfathomable depth, the ice of whose sides is more beautifully azure than the sky. In these regions everything changes, and is in motion. This vast mass of ice has one general progress, which ceases neither day nor night; it breaks and bursts for ever: some undulations sink while others rise; it is never the same. The echo of rocks, or of the ice and snow which fall from their overhanging precipices, or roll from their aerial summits, scarcely ceases for one moment. One would think that Mont Blanc, like the god of the Stoics, was a vast animal, and that the frozen blood for ever circulated through his stony veins.

We dined (Mary, Claire, and I) on the grass, in the open air, surrounded by this scene. The air is piercing and clear. We returned down the mountain sometimes encompassed by the driving vapours, sometimes cheered

by the sunbeams, and arrived at our inn by seven o'clock.

*Montalegre, July 28th.*

The next morning we returned through the rain to St. Martin. The scenery had lost something of its immensity, thick clouds hanging over the highest mountains ; but visitings of sunlight intervened between the showers, and the blue sky shone between the accumulated clouds of snowy whiteness which brought them ; the dazzling mountains sometimes glittered through a chasm of the clouds above our heads, and all the charm of its grandeur remained. We repassed *Pont Pellisier*, a wooden bridge over the Arve, and the ravine of the Arve. We repassed the pine forests which overhang the defile, the chateau of St. Michael ; a haunted ruin, built on the edge of a precipice, and shadowed over by the eternal forest. We repassed the vale of Servoz, a vale more beautiful, because more luxuriant, than that of Chamouni. Mont Blanc forms one of the sides of this vale also, and the other is enclosed by an irregular amphitheatre of enormous mountains, one of which is in ruins, and fell fifty years ago into the higher part of the valley : the smoke of its fall was seen in Piedmont, and people went from Turin to investigate whether a volcano had not burst forth among the Alps. It continued falling many days, spreading, with the shock and thunder of its ruin, consternation into the neighbouring vales. In the evening we arrived at St. Martin. The next day we wound through the valley, which I have described before, and arrived in the evening at our home.

We have bought some specimens of minerals and plants, and two or three crystal seals, at Mont Blanc, to preserve the remembrance of having approached it. There is a cabinet of *histoire naturelle* at Chamouni, just as at Keswick, Matlock, and Clifton ; the proprietor of which is the very vilest specimen of that vile species of quack, that, together with the whole army of aubergistes and guides, and indeed the entire mass of the popu-

lation, subsist on the weakness and credulity of travellers as leeches subsist on the sick. The most interesting of my purchases is a large collection of all the seeds of rare alpine plants, with their names written upon the outside of the papers that contain them. These I mean to colonize in my garden in England, and to permit you to make what choice you please from them. They are companions which the Celandine—the classic Celandine—need not despise;<sup>1</sup> they are as wild and more daring than he, and will tell him tales of things even as touching and sublime as the gaze of a vernal poet.

Did I tell you that there are troops of wolves among these mountains? In the winter they descend into the valleys, which the snow occupies six months of the year, and devour everything that they can find out of doors. A wolf is more powerful than the fiercest and strongest dog. There are no bears in these regions. We heard, when we were in Lucerne, that they were occasionally found in the forests which surround that lake.

Adieu,

S.

### LETTER 5

*Milan, April, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Behold us arrived at length at the end of our journey—that is, within a few miles of it—because we design to spend the summer on the shore of the lake of Como. Our journey was somewhat painful from the cold—and in no other manner interesting until we passed the Alps: of course I except the Alps themselves; but no sooner had we arrived at Italy, than the loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations. I depend on these things for life; for in the smoke of cities, and the tumult of human kind, and the chilling fogs and rain of our own country, I can hardly be said to live. With what delight did I hear the woman, who conducted us

<sup>1</sup> Compare Peacock's note on the celandine, Letter 22.

to see the triumphal arch of Augustus at Susa, speak the clear and complete language of Italy, though half unintelligible to me, after that nasal and abbreviated cacophony of the French. A ruined arch of magnificent proportions, in the Greek taste, standing in a kind of road of green lawn overgrown with violets and primroses, and in the midst of stupendous mountains, and a *blonde* woman, of light and graceful manners, something in the style of Fuseli's Eve, were the first things we met in Italy.

This city is very agreeable. We went to the opera last night—which is a most splendid exhibition. The opera itself was not a favourite, and the singers very inferior to our own. But the ballet, or rather a kind of melodrama or pantomimic drama, was the most splendid spectacle I ever saw. We have no Miss Melanie here—in every other respect, Milan is unquestionably superior. The manner in which language is translated into gesture, the complete and full effect of the whole as illustrating the history in question, the unaffected self-possession of each of the actors, even to the children, made this choral drama more impressive than I could have conceived possible. The story is *Othello*, and strange to say, it left no disagreeable impression.

I write, but I am not in the humour to write, and you must expect longer, if not more entertaining, letters soon—that is, in a week or so—when I am a little recovered from my journey. Pray tell us all the news with regard to our own offspring, whom we left at nurse in England; as well as those of our friends. Mention Cobbett and politics too—and Hunt—to whom Mary is now writing—and particularly your own plans and yourself. You shall hear more of me and my plans soon. My health is improved already—and my spirits something—and I have many literary schemes, and one in particular—which I thirst to be settled that I may begin. I have ordered Ollier to send you some sheets, &c., for revision. Adieu.—Always faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 6

*Milan, April 20, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I had no conception that the distance between us, measured by time in respect of letters, was so great. I have but just received yours dated the 2nd—and when you will receive mine written from this city somewhat later than the same date, I cannot know. I am sorry to hear that you have been obliged to remain at Marlow; a certain degree of society being almost a necessity of life, particularly as we are not to see you this summer in Italy. But this, I suppose, must be as it is. I often revisit Marlow in thought. The curse of this life is, that whatever is once known, can never be unknown. You inhabit a spot, which before you inhabit it, is as indifferent to you as any other spot upon earth, and when, persuaded by some necessity, you think to leave it, you leave it not; it clings to you—and with memories of things, which, in your experience of them, gave no such promise, revenges your desertion. Time flows on, places are changed; friends who were with us, are no longer with us; yet what has been seems yet to be, but barren and stripped of life. See, I have sent you a study for *Nightmare Abbey*.

Since I last wrote to you we have been to Como, looking for a house. This lake exceeds any thing I ever beheld in beauty, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney. It is long and narrow, and has the appearance of a mighty river winding among the mountains and the forests. We sailed from the town of Como to a tract of country called the Tremezina, and saw the various aspects presented by that part of the lake. The mountains between Como and that village, or rather cluster of villages, are covered on high with chestnut forests (the eating chestnuts, on which the inhabitants of the country subsist in time of scarcity), which sometimes descend to the very verge

of the lake, overhanging it with their hoary branches. But usually the immediate border of this shore is composed of laurel-trees, and bay, and myrtle, and wild fig-trees, and olives, which grow in the crevices of the rocks, and overhang the caverns, and shadow the deep glens, which are filled with the flashing light of the waterfalls. Other flowering shrubs, which I cannot name, grow there also. On high, the towers of village churches are seen white among the dark forests. Beyond, on the opposite shore, which faces the south, the mountains descend less precipitously to the lake, and although they are much higher, and some covered with perpetual snow, there intervenes between them and the lake a range of lower hills, which have glens and rifts opening to the other, such as I should fancy the *abysses* of Ida or Parnassus. Here are plantations of olive, and orange, and lemon trees, which are now so loaded with fruit, that there is more fruit than leaves—and vineyards. This shore of the lake is one continued village, and the Milanese nobility have their villas here. The union of culture and the untameable profusion and loveliness of nature is here so close, that the line where they are divided can hardly be discovered. But the finest scenery is that of the Villa Pliniana ; so called from a fountain which ebbs and flows every three hours, described by the younger Pliny, which is in the court-yard. This house, which was once a magnificent palace, and is now half in ruins, we are endeavouring to procure. It is built upon terraces *raised from* the bottom of the lake, together with its garden, at the foot of a semi-circular precipice, overshadowed by profound forests of chestnut. The scene from the colonnade is the most extraordinary, at once, and the most lovely that eye ever beheld. On one side is the mountain, and immediately over you are clusters of cypress-trees of an astonishing height, which seem to pierce the sky. Above you, from among the clouds, as it were, descends a waterfall of immense size, broken by the woody rocks into a thousand channels to the lake. On the other

side is seen the blue extent of the lake and the mountains, speckled with sails and spires. The apartments of the Pliniana are immensely large, but ill furnished and antique. The terraces, which overlook the lake, and conduct under the shade of such immense laurel-trees as deserve the epithet of Pythian, are most delightful. We staid at Como two days, and have now returned to Milan, waiting the issue of our negotiation about a house. Como is only six leagues from Milan, and its mountains are seen from the cathedral.

This cathedral is a most astonishing work of art. It is built of white marble, and cut into pinnacles of immense height, and the utmost delicacy of workmanship, and loaded with sculpture. The effect of it, piercing the solid blue with those groups of dazzling spires, relieved by the serene depth of this Italian heaven, or by moonlight when the stars seem gathered among those clustered shapes, is beyond any thing I had imagined architecture capable of producing. The interior, though very sublime, is of a more earthly character, and with its stained glass and massy granite columns overloaded with antique figures, and the silver lamps, that burn for ever under the canopy of black cloth beside the brazen altar and the marble fretwork of the dome, give it the aspect of some gorgeous sepulchre. There is one solitary spot among those aisles, behind the altar, where the light of day is dim and yellow under the storied window, which I have chosen to visit, and read Dante there.

I have devoted this summer, and indeed the next year, to the composition of a tragedy on the subject of Tasso's madness, which I find upon inspection is, if properly treated, admirably dramatic and poetical. But, you will say, I have no dramatic talent; very true, in a certain sense; but I have taken the resolution to see what kind of a tragedy a person without dramatic talent could write. It shall be better morality than Fazio,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> By Dean Milman.

better poetry than Bertram,<sup>1</sup> at least. You tell me nothing of Rhododaphne,<sup>2</sup> a book from which, I confess, I expected extraordinary success.

Who lives in my house at Marlow now, or what is to be done with it? I am seriously persuaded that the situation was injurious to my health, or I should be tempted to feel a very absurd interest in who is to be its next possessor. The expense of our journey here has been very considerable—but we are now living at the hotel here, in a kind of Pension, which is very reasonable in respect of price, and when we get into a menage of our own, we have every reason to expect that we shall experience something of the boasted cheapness of Italy. The finest bread, made of a sifted flour, the whitest and the best I ever tasted, is only *one English penny* a pound. All the necessaries of life bear a proportional relation to this. But then the luxuries, tea, &c., are very dear,—and the English, as usual, are cheated in a way that is quite ridiculous, if they have not their wits about them. We do not know a single human being, and the opera, until last night, has been always the same. Lord Byron, we hear, has taken a house for three years, at Venice; whether we shall see him or not, I do not know. The number of English who pass through this town is very great. They ought to be in their own country in the present crisis. Their conduct is wholly inexcusable. The people here, though inoffensive enough, seem both in body and soul a miserable race. The men are hardly men; they look like a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves, and I do not think that I have seen a gleam of intelligence in the countenance of man since I passed the Alps. The women in enslaved countries are always better than the men; but they have tight-laced figures,

<sup>1</sup> By Maturin. Both these tragedies had been staged in London within three years of the date of this letter.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley wrote a review of this, the most ambitious of Peacock's poems, for Leigh Hunt; but it was not published. It has been printed in Mr. Buxton Forman's third volume.

and figures and mien which express (O how unlike the French !) a mixture of the coquette and prude, which reminds me of the worst characteristics of the English.<sup>1</sup> Everything but humanity is in much greater perfection here than in France. The cleanliness and comfort of the inns is something quite English. The country is beautifully cultivated ; and altogether, if you can, as one ought always to do, find your happiness in yourself, it is a most delightful and commodious place to live in.

Adieu.—Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 7

*Milan, April 30th, 1818.*

My DEAR PEACOCK,

I write, simply to tell you, to direct your next letters, Poste Restante, Pisa. We have engaged a vetturino for that city, and leave Milan to-morrow morning. Our journey will occupy six or seven days.

Pisa is not six miles from the Mediterranean, with which it communicates by the river Arno. We shall pass by Piacenza, Parma, Bologna, the Apennines, and Florence, and I will endeavour to tell you something of these celebrated places in my next letter ; but I cannot promise much, for, though my health is much improved, my spirits are unequal, and seem to desert me when I attempt to write.

Pisa, they say, is uninhabitable in the midst of summer—we shall do, therefore, what other people do, retire to Florence, or to the mountains. But I will write to you our plans from Pisa, when I shall understand them better myself.

<sup>1</sup> These impressions of Shelley, with regard to the Italians, formed in ignorance, and with precipitation, became altogether altered after a longer stay in Italy. He quickly discovered the extraordinary intelligence and genius of this wonderful people, amidst the ignorance in which they are carefully kept by their rulers, and the vices, fostered by a religious system, which these same rulers have used as their most successful engine. [M. S.]

You may easily conjecture the motives which led us to forego the divine solitude of Como. To me, whose chief pleasure in life is the contemplation of nature, you may imagine how great is this loss.

Let us hear from you *once a fortnight*. Do not forget those who do not forget you.

Adieu.—Ever most sincerely yours,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 8

*Livorno, June 5, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We have not heard from you since the middle of April—that is, we have received only *one* letter from you since our departure from England. It necessarily follows that some accident has intercepted them. Address, in future, to the care of Mr. Gisborne, Livorno—and I shall receive them, though sometimes somewhat circuitously, yet always securely.

We left Milan on the 1st of May, and travelled across the Apennines to Pisa. This part of the Apennine is far less beautiful than the Alps; the mountains are wide and wild, and the whole scenery broad and undetermined—the imagination cannot find a home in it. The plain of the Milanese, and that of Parma, is exquisitely beautiful—it is like one garden, or rather cultivated wilderness; because the corn and the meadow-grass grow under high and thick trees, festooned to one another by regular festoons of vines. On the seventh day we arrived at Pisa, where we remained three or four days. A large disagreeable city, almost without inhabitants. We then proceeded to this great trading town, where we have remained a month, and which, in a few days, we leave for the Bagni di Lucca, a kind of watering-place situated in the depth of the Apennines; the scenery surrounding this village is very fine.

We have made some acquaintance with a very amiable and accomplished lady, Mrs. Gisborne, who is the sole

attraction in this most unattractive of cities. We had no idea of spending a month here, but she has made it even agreeable. We shall see something of Italian society at the Bagni di Lucca, where the most fashionable people resort.

When you send my parcel—which, by the bye, I should request you to direct to Mr. Gisborne—I wish you could contrive to enclose the two last parts of Clarke's *Travels*, relating to Greece, and belonging to Hookham. You know I subscribe there still—and I have determined to take the *Examiner* here. You would, therefore, oblige me, by sending it weekly, after having read it yourself, to the same direction, and so clipped, as to make as little weight as possible.

I write as if writing where perhaps my letter may never arrive.

With every good wish from all of us,  
Believe me most sincerely yours,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 9

*Bagni di Lucca, July 25th, 1818.*

My DEAR PEACOCK,

I received on the same day your letters marked 5 and 6, the one directed to Pisa and the other to Livorno, and I can assure you they are most welcome visitors.

Our life here is as unvaried by any external events as if we were at Marlow, where a sail up the river or a journey to London makes an epoch. Since I last wrote to you, I have ridden over to Lucca, once with Claire, and once alone; and we have been over to the Casino, where I cannot say there is anything remarkable, the women being far removed from anything which the most liberal annotator could interpret into beauty or grace, and apparently possessing no intellectual excellences to compensate the deficiency. I assure you it is well that it is so, for the dances, especially the

waltz, are so exquisitely beautiful that it would be a little dangerous to the newly unfrozen senses and imaginations of us migrators from the neighbourhood of the pole. As it is—except in the dark—there could be no peril. The atmosphere here, unlike that of the rest of Italy, is diversified with clouds, which grow in the middle of the day, and sometimes bring thunder and lightning, and hail about the size of a pigeon's egg, and decrease towards the evening, leaving only those finely woven webs of vapour which we see in English skies, and flocks of fleecy and slowly moving clouds, which all vanish before sunset ; and the nights are for ever serene, and we see a star in the east at sunset—I think it is Jupiter—almost as fine as Venus was last summer ; but it wants a certain silver and aërial radiance, and soft yet piercing splendour, which belongs, I suppose, to the latter planet by virtue of its at once divine and female nature. I have forgotten to ask the ladies if Jupiter produces on them the same effect. I take great delight in watching the changes of the atmosphere. In the evening, Mary and I often take a ride, for horses are cheap in this country. In the middle of the day, I bathe in a pool or fountain, formed in the middle of the forests by a torrent. It is surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, and the waterfall of the stream which forms it falls into it on one side with perpetual dashing. Close to it, on the top of the rocks, are alders, and above the great chestnut trees, whose long and pointed leaves pierce the deep blue sky in strong relief. The water of this pool, which, to venture an unrythmical paraphrase, is 'sixteen feet long and ten feet wide', is as transparent as the air, so that the stones and sand at the bottom seem, as it were, trembling in the light of noonday. It is exceedingly cold also. My custom is to undress and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain—a practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing. This torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools

and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body, whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty.

I have lately found myself totally incapable of original composition. I employed my mornings, therefore, in translating the *Symposium*, which I accomplished in ten days. Mary is now transcribing it, and I am writing a prefatory essay. I have been reading scarcely anything but Greek, and a little Italian poetry with Mary. We have finished *Ariosto* together—a thing I could not have done again alone.

*Frankenstein* seems to have been well received; for although the unfriendly criticism of the *Quarterly* is an evil for it, yet it proves that it is read in some considerable degree, and it would be difficult for them, with any appearance of fairness, to deny it merit altogether. Their notice of me, and their exposure of their true motives for not noticing my book, shows how well understood an hostility must subsist between me and them.

The news of the result of the elections, especially that of the metropolis, is highly inspiriting. I received a letter, of two days' later date, with yours, which announced the unfortunate termination of that of Westmoreland. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villainy of those apostates. What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets.

What pleasure would it have given me if the wings of imagination could have divided the space which divides us, and I could have been of your party. I have seen nothing so beautiful as Virginia Water in its kind. And my thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest, and the copses of Marlow, like the clouds which hang upon the woods of the mountains, low trailing, and though

they pass away, leave their best dew when they themselves have faded. You tell me that you have finished *Nightmare Abbey*. I hope that you have given the enemy no quarter. Remember, it is a sacred war. We have found an excellent quotation in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*. I will transcribe it, as I do not think you have these plays at Marlow.

‘MATTHEW. O, it’s your only fine humour, sir. Your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself divers times, sir; and then do I no more but take pen and paper presently, and overflow you half a score or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.

‘ED. KNOWELL. Sure, he utters them by the gross.

‘STEPHEN. Truly, sir; and I love such things out of measure.

‘ED. KNOWELL. I’ faith, better than in measure, I’ll undertake.

‘MATTHEW. Why, I pray you, sir, make use of my study; it’s at your service.

‘STEPHEN. I thank you, sir; I shall be bold, I warrant you. *Have you a stool there to be melancholy upon?* — *Every Man in his Humour*, Act 3, scene i.

The last expression would not make a bad motto.<sup>1</sup>

## LETTER 10

*Bagni de Lucca, Aug. 16th, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

No new event has been added to my life since I wrote last: at least none which might not have taken place as well on the banks of the Thames as on those of the Serchio. I project soon a short excursion, of a week or so, to some of the neighbouring cities; and on the 10th of September we leave this place for Florence,

<sup>1</sup> I adopted this passage as a second motto, omitting E. Knowell's interlocutions. [T. L. P.]

when I shall at least be able to tell you of some things which you cannot see from your windows.

I have finished, by taking advantage of a few days of inspiration—which the *Camoenae* have been lately very backward in conceding—the little poem I began sending to the press in London.<sup>1</sup> Ollier will send you the proofs. Its structure is slight and aëry; its subject ideal. The metre corresponds with the spirit of the poem, and varies with the flow of the feeling. I have translated, and Mary has transcribed, the *Symposium*, as well as my poem; and I am proceeding to employ myself on a discourse, upon the subject of which the *Symposium* treats, considering the subject with reference to the difference of sentiments respecting it, existing between the Greeks and modern nations; a subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or I will not practise in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary. Not that I have any serious thought of publishing either this discourse or the *Symposium*, at least till I return to England, when we may discuss the propriety of it.

*Nightmare Abbey* finished. Well, what is in it? What is it? You are as secret as if the priest of Ceres had dictated its sacred pages. However, I suppose I shall see in time, when my second parcel arrives. My first is yet absent. By what conveyance did you send it?

Pray, are you yet cured of your Nympholepsy? 'Tis a sweet disease: but one as obstinate and dangerous as any—even when the Nymph is a Poliad.<sup>2</sup> Whether such be the case or not, I hope your nympholeptic tale is not abandoned.<sup>3</sup> The subject, if treated with a due spiece of Bacchic fury, and interwoven with the manners and feelings of those divine people, who, in their very errors, are the mirrors, as it were, in which all that is

<sup>1</sup> *Rosalind and Helen.*

<sup>2</sup> I suppose I understood this at the time; but I have now not the most distant recollection of what it alludes to. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> I abandoned this design on seeing the announcement of Horace Smith's *Amarynthus the Nympholept*.

delicate and graceful contemplates itself, is perhaps equal to any. What a wonderful passage there is in *Phaedrus*—the beginning, I think, of one of the speeches of Socrates<sup>1</sup>—in praise of poetic madness, and in definition of what poetry is, and how a man becomes a poet. Every man who lives in this age and desires to write poetry, ought, as a preservative against the false and narrow systems of criticism which every poetical empiric vents, to impress himself with this sentence, if he would be numbered among those to whom may apply this proud, though sublime, expression of Tasso : *Non c'è in mondo chi merita nome di creatore, che Dio ed il Poeta.*

The weather has been brilliantly fine ; and now, among these mountains, the autumnal air is becoming less hot, especially in the mornings and evenings. The chestnut woods are now inexpressibly beautiful, for the chestnuts have become large, and add a new richness to the full foliage. We see here Jupiter in the east ; and Venus, I believe, as the evening star, directly after sunset.

More and better in my next. Mary and Claire desire their kind remembrances. Most faithfully your friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 11

*Este, October 8, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have not written to you, I think, for six weeks. But I have been on the point of writing many times, and have often felt that I had many things to say. But I have not been without events to distract and distract me, amongst which is the death of my little girl. She died of a disorder peculiar to the climate. We have all

<sup>1</sup> The passage alluded to is this :—‘ There are several kinds,’ says Socrates, ‘ of divine madness. That which proceeds from the Muses taking possession of a tender and unoccupied soul, awaking, and bacchically inspiring it towards songs and other poetry, adorning myriads of ancient deeds, instructs succeeding generations ; but he who, without this madness from the Muses,

had bad spirits enough, and I, in addition, bad health. I *intend* to be better soon ; there is no malady, bodily or mental, which does not either kill or is killed.

We left the Baths of Lucca, I think, the day after I wrote to you—on a visit to Venice—partly for the sake of seeing the city. We made a very delightful acquaintance there with a Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, the gentleman an Englishman, and the lady a Swissesse, mild and beautiful, and unprejudiced, in the best sense of the word. The kind attentions of these people made our short stay at Venice very pleasant. I saw Lord Byron, and really hardly knew him again ; he is changed into the liveliest and happiest-looking man I ever met. He read me the first canto of his ‘Don Juan’—a thing in the style of Beppo, but infinitely better, and dedicated to Southey, in ten or a dozen stanzas, more like a mixture of wormwood and verdigrease than satire. Venice is a wonderfully fine city. The approach to it over the laguna, with its domes and turrets glittering in a long line over the blue waves, is one of the finest architectural delusions in the world. It seems to have—and literally it has—its foundations in the sea. The silent streets are paved with water, and you hear nothing but the dashing of the oars, and the occasional cries of the gondolieri. I heard nothing of Tasso. The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance ; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey ; they curl at the prow and stern, and at the former there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass.

approaches the poetical gates, having persuaded himself that by art alone he may become sufficiently a poet, will find in the end his own imperfection, and see the poetry of his cold prudence vanish into nothingness before the light of that which has sprung from divine insanity.’—*Platonis Phaedrus*, p. 245 a. [T. L. P.]

The passage occurs in § 49 of the *Phaedrus*, § 245 a of Plato’s Works. Peacock’s first sentence is introductory, not a translation. This is the third kind of madness which Plato enumerates.

The Doge's palace, with its library, is a fine monument of aristocratic power. I saw the dungeons, where these scoundrels used to torment their victims. They are of three kinds—one adjoining the place of trial, where the prisoners destined to immediate execution were kept. I could not descend into them, because the day on which I visited it was festa. Another under the leads of the palace, where the sufferers were roasted to death or madness by the ardours of an Italian sun: and others called the Pozzi—or wells, deep underneath, and communicating with those on the roof by secret passages—where the prisoners were confined sometimes half up to their middles in stinking water. When the French came here, they found only one old man in the dungeons, and he could not speak. But Venice, which was once a tyrant, is now the next worst thing, a slave; for in fact it ceased to be free, or worth our regret as a nation, from the moment that the oligarchy usurped the rights of the people. Yet, I do not imagine that it was ever so degraded as it has been since the French, and especially the Austrian yoke. The Austrians take sixty per cent. in taxes, and impose free quarters on the inhabitants. A horde of German soldiers, as vicious and more disgusting than the Venetians themselves, insult these miserable people. I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice.

We have been living this last month near the little town from which I date this letter, in a very pleasant villa which has been lent to us, and we are now on the point of proceeding to Florence, Rome, and Naples—at which last city we shall spend the winter, and return northwards in the spring. Behind us here are the Euganean hills, not so beautiful as those of the Bagni di Lucca, with Arquà, where Petrarch's house and tomb are religiously preserved and visited. At the end of our garden is an extensive Gothic castle, now the habitation

of owls and bats, where the Medici family resided before they came to Florence. We see before us the wide flat plains of Lombardy, in which we see the sun and moon rise and set, and the evening star, and all the golden magnificence of autumnal clouds. But I reserve wonder for Naples.

I have been writing—and indeed have just finished the first act of a lyric and classical drama, to be called ‘Prometheus Unbound’. Will you tell me what there is in Cicero about a drama supposed to have been written by Aeschylus under this title.

I ought to say that I have just read Malthus in a French translation. Malthus is a very clever man, and the world would be a great gainer if it would seriously take his lessons into consideration, if it were capable of attending seriously to anything but mischief—but what on earth does he mean by some of his inferences !

Yours ever faithfully,  
P. B. S.

I will write again from Rome and Florence—in better spirits, and to more agreeable purpose, I hope. You saw those beautiful stanzas in the fourth canto about the Nymph Egeria.<sup>1</sup> Well, I did not whisper a word about nympholepsy : I hope you acquit me—and I hope you will not carry delicacy so far as to let this suppress anything nympholeptic.

## LETTER 12

*Ferrara, Nov. 8th, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We left Este yesterday on our journey towards Naples. The roads were particularly bad ; we have, therefore, accomplished only two days' journey, of eighteen and twenty-four miles each, and you may imagine that our horses must be tolerably good ones, to

<sup>1</sup> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto iv, stanzas cxv to cxix.

drag our carriage, with five people and heavy luggage, through deep and clayey roads. The roads are, however, good during the rest of the way.

The country is flat, but intersected by lines of wood, trellised with vines, whose broad leaves are now stamped with the redness of their decay. Every here and there one sees people employed in agricultural labours, and the plough, the harrow, or the cart, drawn by long teams of milk-white or dove-coloured oxen of immense size and exquisite beauty. This, indeed, might be the country of Pasiphaes. In one farm-yard I was shown sixty-three of these lovely oxen, tied to their stalls, in excellent condition. A farm-yard in this part of Italy is somewhat different from one in England. First, the house, which is large and high, with strange-looking unpainted window-shutters, generally closed, and dreary beyond conception. The farm-yard and out-buildings, however, are usually in the neatest order. The threshing-floor is not under cover, but like that described in the Georgics, usually flattened by a broken column, and neither the mole, nor the toad, nor the ant, can find on its area a crevice for their dwelling. Around it, at this season, are piled the stacks of the leaves and stalks of Indian corn, which has lately been threshed and dried upon its surface. At a little distance are vast heaps of many-coloured zucche or pumpkins, some of enormous size, piled as winter food for the hogs. There are turkeys, too, and fowls wandering about, and two or three dogs, who bark with a sharp hylactism. The people who are occupied with the care of these things seem neither ill-clothed nor ill-fed, and the blunt incivility of their manners has an English air with it, very discouraging to those who are accustomed to the impudent and polished lying of the inhabitants of the cities. I should judge the agricultural resources of this country to be immense, since it can wear so flourishing an appearance, in spite of the enormous discouragements which the various tyranny of the governments inflicts on it. I ought to say that one of the farms belongs to

a Jew banker at Venice, another Shylock.—We arrived late at the inn where I now write; it was once the palace of a Venetian nobleman, and is now an excellent inn. To-morrow we are going to see the sights of Ferrara.

Nov. 9.

We have had heavy rain and thunder all night; and the former still continuing, we went in the carriage about the town. We went first to look at the cathedral, but the beggars very soon made us sound a retreat, so, whether, as it is said, there is a copy of a picture of Michael Angelo there or no, I cannot tell. At the public library we were more successful. This is, indeed, a magnificent establishment, containing, as they say, 160,000 volumes. We saw some illuminated manuscripts of church music, with verses of the psalms interlined between the square notes, each of which consisted of the most delicate tracery, in colours inconceivably vivid. They belonged to the neighbouring convent of Certosa, and are three or four hundred years old; but their hues are as fresh as if they had been executed yesterday. The tomb of Ariosto occupies one end of the largest saloon of which the library is composed; it is formed of various marbles, surmounted by an expressive bust of the poet, and subscribed with a few Latin verses, in a less miserable taste than those usually employed for similar purposes. But the most interesting exhibitions here, are the writings, &c., of Ariosto and Tasso, which are preserved, and were concealed from the undistinguishing depredations of the French with pious care. There is the armchair of Ariosto, an old plain wooden piece of furniture, the hard seat of which was once occupied by, but has now survived its cushion, as it has its master. I could fancy Ariosto sitting in it; and the satires in his own handwriting which they unfold beside it, and the old bronze inkstand, loaded with figures, which belonged also to him, assists the willing delusion. This inkstand has an antique, rather than an ancient appear-

ance. Three nymphs lean forth from the circumference, and on the top of the lid stands a cupid, winged and looking up, with a torch in one hand, his bow in the other, and his quiver beside him. A medal was bound round the skeleton of Ariosto, with his likeness impressed upon it. I cannot say I think it had much native expression, but perhaps the artist was in fault. On the reverse is a hand, cutting with a pair of scissors the tongue from a serpent, upraised from the grass, with this legend—*Pro bono malum*. What this reverse of the boasted Christian maxim means, or how it applies to Ariosto, either as a satirist or a serious writer, I cannot exactly tell. The cicerone attempted to explain, and it is to his commentary that my bewildering is probably due—if, indeed, the meaning be very plain, as is possibly the case.<sup>1</sup>

There is here a manuscript of the entire *Gerusalemme Liberata*, written by Tasso's own hand; a manuscript of some poems, written in prison, to the Duke Alfonso; and the satires of Ariosto, written also by his own hand; and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini. The *Gerusalemme*, though it had evidently been copied and recopied, is interlined, particularly towards the end, with numerous corrections. The handwriting of Ariosto is a small, firm, and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso is large, free, and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow, which brings the letters into a smaller compass than

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Garnett explains this legend by the following quotation from Mr. C. F. Keary's *Guide to the Italian Medals exhibited in the British Museum* :—‘The motto of this medal [by Poggini] is the same as that on the medal of Ariosto by Pastorini of Siena. But the meaning of the reverse design is very different. Both, it is probable, refer to the quarrel between Ariosto and the elder Cardinal d'Este; but one takes the side of the poet, who is symbolized by the bees, expelled from their home as an ungrateful return for the honey which they have given; while the other medal, taking the side of Cardinal d'Este, symbolizes Ariosto as a serpent who stings those that have nurtured him.’

one expected from the beginning of the word. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chillness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet. You know I always seek in what I see the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object ; and as we do not agree in physiognomy, so we may not agree now. But my business is to relate my own sensations, and not to attempt to inspire others with them. Some of the MSS. of Tasso were sonnets to his persecutor, which contain a great deal of what is called flattery. If Alfonso's ghost were asked how he felt those praises now, I wonder what he would say. But to me there is much more to pity than to condemn in these entreaties and praises of Tasso. It is as a bigot prays to and praises his god, whom he knows to be the most remorseless, capricious, and inflexible of tyrants, but whom he knows also to be omnipotent. Tasso's situation was widely different from that of any persecuted being of the present day ; for, from the depth of dungeons, public opinion might now at length be awakened to an echo that would startle the oppressor. But then there was no hope. There is something irresistibly pathetic to me in the sight of Tasso's own handwriting, moulding expressions of adulation and entreaty to a deaf and stupid tyrant, in an age when the most heroic virtue would have exposed its possessor to hopeless persecution, and—such is the alliance between virtue and genius—which unoffending genius could not escape.

We went afterwards to see his prison in the hospital of Sant' Anna, and I enclose you a piece of the wood of the very door, which for seven years and three months divided this glorious being from the air, and the light which had nourished in him those influences which he has communicated, through his poetry, to thousands. The dungeon is low and dark, and when I say that it is really a very decent dungeon, I speak as one who has seen the prisons in the doge's palace of Venice. But it

is a horrible abode for the coarsest and meanest thing that ever wore the shape of man, much more for one of delicate susceptibilities and elevated fancies. It is low, and has a grated window, and being sunk some feet below the level of the earth, is full of unwholesome damps. In the darkest corner is a mark in the wall where the chains were rivetted, which bound him hand and foot. After some time, at the instance of some Cardinal, his friend, the Duke allowed his victim a fireplace; the mark where it was walled up yet remains.

At the entrance of the Liceo, where the library is, we were met by a penitent; his form was completely enveloped in a ghost-like drapery of white flannel; his bare feet were sandalled; and there was a kind of network visor drawn over his eyes, so as entirely to conceal his face. I imagine that this man had been adjudged to suffer this penance for some crime known only to himself and his confessor, and this kind of exhibition is a striking instance of the power of the Catholic superstition over the human mind. He passed, rattling his wooden box for charity.<sup>1</sup>

Adieu.—You will hear from me again before I arrive at Naples.

Yours, ever sincerely,  
P. B. S.

### LETTER 13

*Bologna, Monday, Nov. 9th, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have seen a quantity of things here—churches, palaces, statues, fountains, and pictures; and my brain is at this moment like a portfolio of an architect, or a print-shop, or a commonplace-book. I will try to recollect something of what I have seen; for, indeed, it requires, if it will obey, an act of volition. First, we went to the cathedral, which contains nothing remark-

<sup>1</sup> These penitents ask alms, to be spent in masses for the souls in purgatory. [M. S.]

able, except a kind of shrine, or rather a marble canopy, loaded with sculptures, and supported on four marble columns. We went then to a palace—I am sure I forget the name of it—where we saw a large gallery of pictures. Of course, in a picture gallery you see three hundred pictures you forget, for one you remember. I remember, however, an interesting picture by Guido, of the Rape of Proserpine, in which Proserpine casts back her languid and half-unwilling eyes, as it were, to the flowers she had left ungathered in the fields of Enna. There was an exquisitely executed piece of Correggio, about four saints, one of whom seemed to have a pet dragon in a leash. I was told that it was the devil who was bound in that style—but who can make anything of four saints? For what can they be supposed to be about? There was one painting, indeed, by this master, Christ beatified, inexpressibly fine. It is a half figure, seated on a mass of clouds, tinged with an aethereal, rose-like lustre; the arms are expanded; the whole frame seems dilated with expression; the countenance is heavy, as it were, with the weight of the rapture of the spirit; the lips parted, but scarcely parted, with the breath of intense but regulated passion; the eyes are calm and benignant; the whole features harmonized in majesty and sweetness. The hair is parted on the forehead, and falls in heavy locks on each side. It is motionless, but seems as if the faintest breath would move it. The colouring, I suppose, must be very good, if I could remark and understand it. The sky is of a pale aërial orange, like the tints of latest sunset; it does not seem painted around and beyond the figure, but everything seems to have absorbed, and to have been penetrated by its hues. I do not think we saw any other of Correggio, but this specimen gives me a very exalted idea of his powers.

We went to see heaven knows how many more palaces—Ranuzzi, Marriscalchi, Aldobrandi. If you want Italian names for any purpose, here they are; I should be glad of them if I was writing a novel. I saw

many more of Guido. One, a Samson drinking water out of an ass's jaw-bone, in the midst of the slaughtered Philistines. Why he is supposed to do this, God, who gave him this jaw-bone, alone knows—but certain it is, that the painting is a very fine one. The figure of Samson stands in strong relief in the foreground, coloured, as it were, in the hues of human life, and full of strength and elegance. Round him lie the Philistines in all the attitudes of death. One prone, with the slight convulsion of pain just passing from his forehead, whilst on his lips and chin death lies as heavy as sleep. Another leaning on his arm, with his hand, white and motionless, hanging out beyond. In the distance, more dead bodies ; and, still further beyond, the blue sea and the blue mountains, and one white and tranquil sail.

There is a *Murder of the Innocents*, also, by Guido, finely coloured, with much fine expression—but the subject is very horrible, and it seemed deficient in strength—at least, you require the highest ideal energy, the most poetical and exalted conception of the subject, to reconcile you to such a contemplation. There was a *Jesus Christ crucified*, by the same, very fine. One gets tired, indeed, whatever may be the conception and execution of it, of seeing that monotonous and agonized form for ever exhibited in one prescriptive attitude of torture. But the *Magdalen*, clinging to the cross with the look of passive and gentle despair beaming from beneath her bright flaxen hair, and the figure of *St. John*, with his looks uplifted in passionate compassion ; his hands clasped, and his fingers twisting themselves together, as it were, with involuntary anguish ; his feet almost writhing up from the ground with the same sympathy ; and the whole of this arrayed in colours of a diviner nature, yet most like nature's self :—of the contemplation of this one would never weary.

There was a '*Fortune*', too, of Guido ; a piece of mere beauty. There was the figure of *Fortune* on a globe, eagerly proceeding onwards, and *Love* was trying to catch her back by the hair, and her face was half

turned towards him ; her long chestnut hair was floating in the stream of the wind, and threw its shadow over her fair forehead. Her hazel eyes were fixed on her pursuer with a meaning look of playfulness, and a light smile was hovering on her lips. The colours which arrayed her delicate limbs were aethereal and warm.

But, perhaps, the most interesting of all the pictures of Guido which I saw was a *Madonna Lattante*. She is leaning over her child, and the maternal feelings with which she is pervaded are shadowed forth on her soft and gentle countenance, and in her simple and affectionate gestures—there is what an unfeeling observer would call a dullness in the expression of her face ; her eyes are almost closed ; her lip depressed ; there is a serious, and even a heavy relaxation, as it were, of all the muscles which are called into action by ordinary emotions : but it is only as if the spirit of love, almost insupportable from its intensity, were brooding over and weighing down the soul, or whatever it is, without which the material frame is inanimate and inexpressive.

There is another painter here, called Franceschini, a Bolognese, who, though certainly very inferior to Guido, is yet a person of excellent powers. One entire church, that of *Santa Catarina*, is covered by his works. I do not know whether any of his pictures have ever been seen in England. His colouring is less warm than that of Guido, but nothing can be more clear and delicate ; it is as if he could have dipped his pencil in the hues of some serenest and star-shining twilight. His forms have the same delicacy and aërial loveliness ; their eyes are all bright with innocence and love ; their lips scarce divided by some gentle and sweet emotion. His winged children are the loveliest ideal beings ever created by the human mind. These are generally, whether in the capacity of *Cherubim* or *Cupid*, accessories to the rest of the picture ; and the underplot of their lovely and infantine play is something almost pathetic, from the excess of its unpretending beauty. One of the best of his pieces is an *Annunciation* of the

Virgin ; the Angel is beaming in beauty ; the Virgin, soft, retiring, and simple.

We saw, besides, one picture of Raphael—St. Cecilia ; this is in another and higher style ; you forget that it is a picture as you look at it ; and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived and executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is a unity and a perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure, St. Cecilia, seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painter's mind ; her deep, dark, eloquent eyes lifted up ; her chestnut hair flung back from her forehead—she holds an organ in her hands—her countenance, as it were, calmed by the depth of its passion and rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of heaven, and, as I imagine, has just ceased to sing, for the four figures that surround her evidently point, by their attitudes, towards her ; particularly St. John, who, with a tender yet impassioned gesture, bends his countenance towards her, languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie various instruments of music, broken and unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak ; it eclipses nature, yet it has all her truth and softness.

We saw some pictures of Domenichino, Caracci, Albano, Guercino, Elisabetta Sirani. The two former—remember, I do not pretend to taste—I cannot admire. Of the latter there are some beautiful Madonnas. There are several of Guercino, which they said were very fine. I dare say they were, for the strength and complication of his figures made my head turn round. One, indeed, was certainly powerful. It was the representation of the founder of the Carthusians exercising his austerities in the desert, with a youth as his attendant, kneeling beside him at an altar ; on another altar stood a skull

and a crucifix ; and around were the rocks and the trees of the wilderness. I never saw such a figure as this fellow. His face was wrinkled like a dried snake's skin, and drawn in long hard lines : his very hands were wrinkled. He looked like an animated mummy. He was clothed in a loose dress of death-coloured flannel, such as you might fancy a shroud might be, after it had wrapt a corpse a month or two. It had a yellow, putrefied, ghastly hue, which it cast on all the objects around, so that the hands and face of the Carthusian and his companion were jaundiced by this sepulchral glimmer. Why write books against religion, when we may hang up such pictures ? But the world either will not or cannot see. The gloomy effect of this was softened, and, at the same time, its sublimity diminished, by the figure of the Virgin and Child in the sky, looking down with admiration on the monk, and a beautiful flying figure of an angel.

Enough of pictures. I saw the place where Guido and his mistress, Elisabetta Sirani, were buried. This lady was poisoned at the age of twenty-six, by another lover, a rejected one of course. Our guide said she was very ugly, and that we might see her portrait to-morrow.

Well, good-night, for the present. ' To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.'

*November 10.*

To-day we first went to see those divine pictures of Raphael and Guido again, and then rode up the mountains, behind this city, to visit a chapel dedicated to the Madonna. It made me melancholy to see that they had been varnishing and restoring some of these pictures, and that even some had been pierced by the French bayonets. These are symptoms of the mortality of man ; and perhaps few of his works are more evanescent than paintings. Sculpture retains its freshness for twenty centuries—the Apollo and the Venus are as they were. But books are perhaps the only productions

of man coeval with the human race. Sophocles and Shakspeare can be produced and reproduced for ever. But how evanescent are paintings ! and must necessarily be. Those of Zeuxis and Apelles are no more, and perhaps they bore the same relation to Homer and Aeschylus, that those of Guido and Raphael bear to Dante and Petrarch. There is one refuge from the despondency of this contemplation. The material part, indeed, of their works must perish, but they survive in the mind of man, and the remembrances connected with them are transmitted from generation to generation. The poet embodies them in his creations ; the systems of philosophers are modelled to gentleness by their contemplation ; opinion, that legislator, is infected with their influence ; men become better and wiser ; and the unseen seeds are perhaps thus sown, which shall produce a plant more excellent even than that from which they fell. But all this might as well be said or thought at Marlow as Bologna.

The chapel of the Madonna is a very pretty Corinthian building— very beautiful, indeed. It commands a fine view of these fertile plains, the many-folded Apennines, and the city. I have just returned from a moonlight walk through Bologna. It is a city of colonnades, and the effect of moonlight is strikingly picturesque. There are two towers here—one 400 feet high—ugly things, built of brick, which lean both different ways ; and with the delusion of moonlight shadows, you might almost fancy that the city is rocked by an earthquake. They say they were built so on purpose ; but I observe in all the plain of Lombardy the church towers lean.

Adieu.—God grant you patience to read this long letter, and courage to support the expectation of the next. Pray part them from the *Cobbettos* on your breakfast table—they may fight it out in your mind.

Yours ever, most sincerely,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 14

*Rome, November 20th, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Behold me in the capital of the vanished world ! But I have seen nothing except St. Peter's and the Vatican, overlooking the city in the mist of distance, and the Dogana, where they took us to have our luggage examined, which is built between the ruins of a temple to Antoninus Pius. The Corinthian columns rise over the dwindle palaces of the modern town, and the wrought cornice is changed on one side, as it were, to masses of wave-worn precipice, which overhang you, far, far on high.

I take advantage of this rainy evening, and before Rome has effaced all other recollections, to endeavour to recall the vanished scenes through which we have passed. We left Bologna, I forget on what day, and passing by Rimini, Fano, and Foligno, along the Via Flaminia and Terni, have arrived at Rome after ten days' somewhat tedious, but most interesting journey. The most remarkable things we saw were the Roman excavations in the rock, and the great waterfall of Terni. Of course you have heard that there are a Roman bridge and a triumphal arch at Rimini, and in what excellent taste they are built. The bridge is not unlike the Strand bridge, but more bold in proportion, and of course infinitely smaller. From Fano we left the coast of the Adriatic, and entered the Apennines, following the course of the Metaurus, the banks of which were the scene of the defeat of Asdrubal : and it is said (you can refer to the book) that Livy has given a very exact and animated description of it. I forget all about it, but shall look as soon as our boxes are opened. Following the river, the vale contracts, the banks of the river become steep and rocky, the forests of oak and ilex which overhang its emerald-coloured stream, cling to their abrupt precipices. About four miles from Fossombrone, the river forces for itself a passage between the

walls and toppling precipices of the loftiest Apennines, which are here rifted to their base, and undermined by the narrow and tumultuous torrent. It was a cloudy morning, and we had no conception of the scene that awaited us. Suddenly the low clouds were struck by the clear north wind, and like curtains of the finest gauze, removed one by one, were drawn from before the mountain, whose heaven-cleaving pinnacles and black crags overhanging one another, stood at length defined in the light of day. The road runs parallel to the river, at a considerable height, and is carried through the mountain by a vaulted cavern. The marks of the chisel of the legionaries of the Roman Consul are yet evident.

We passed on day after day, until we came to Spoleto, I think the most romantic city I ever saw. There is here an aqueduct of astonishing elevation, which unites two rocky mountains—there is the path of a torrent below, whitening the green dell with its broad and barren track of stones, and above there is a castle, apparently of great strength and of tremendous magnitude, which overhangs the city, and whose marble bastions are perpendicular with the precipice. I never saw a more impressive picture; in which the shapes of nature are of the grandest order, but over which the creations of man, sublime from their antiquity and greatness, seem to predominate. The castle was built by Belisarius or Narses, I forget which, but was of that epoch.

From Spoleto we went to Terni, and saw the cataract of the Velino. The glaciers of Montanvert and the source of the Arveiron is the grandest spectacle I ever saw. This is the second. Imagine a river sixty feet in breadth, with a vast volume of waters, the outlet of a great lake among the higher mountains, falling 300 feet into a sightless gulf of snow-white vapour, which bursts up for ever and for ever from a circle of black crags, and thence leaping downwards, making<sup>1</sup> five or six other cataracts, each fifty or a hundred feet high, which exhibit, on a smaller scale, and with beautiful and sub-

<sup>1</sup> ‘making’, Garnett: ‘make’, H. B. F.: ‘made’, M. S. and Rhys.

lime variety, the same appearances. But words (and far less could painting) will not express it. Stand upon the brink of the platform of cliff which is directly opposite. You see the ever-moving water stream down. It comes in thick and tawny folds, flaking off like solid snow gliding down a mountain. It does not seem hollow within, but without it is unequal, like the folding of linen thrown carelessly down; your eye follows it, and it is lost below; not in the black rocks which gird it around, but in its own foam and spray in the cloud-like vapours boiling up from below, which is not like rain, nor mist, nor spray, nor foam, but water, in a shape wholly unlike anything I ever saw before. It is as white as snow, but thick and impenetrable to the eye. The very imagination is bewildered in it. A thunder comes up from the abyss wonderful to hear; for, though it ever sounds, it is never the same, but, modulated by the changing motion, rises and falls intermittently; we passed half an hour in one spot looking at it, and thought but a few minutes had gone by. The surrounding scenery is, in its kind, the loveliest and most sublime that can be conceived. In our first walk we passed through some olive groves, of large and ancient trees, whose hoary and twisted trunks leaned in all directions. We then crossed a path of orange trees by the river side, laden with their golden fruit, and came to a forest of ilex of a large size, whose evergreen and acorn-bearing boughs were intertwined over our winding path. Around, hemming in the narrow vale, were pinnacles of lofty mountains of pyramidal rock clothed with all evergreen plants and trees; the vast pine, whose feathery foliage trembled in the blue air, the ilex, that ancestral inhabitant of these mountains, the arbutus with its crimson-coloured fruit and glittering leaves. After an hour's walk, we came beneath the cataract of Terni, within the distance of half a mile; nearer you cannot approach, for the Nar, which has here its confluence with the Velino, bars the passage. We then crossed the river formed by this confluence, over a

narrow natural bridge of rock, and saw the cataract from the platform I first mentioned. We think of spending some time next year near this waterfall. The inn is very bad, or we should have stayed there longer.

We came from Terni last night to a place called Nepi, and to-day arrived at Rome across the much-belied Campagna di Roma, a place I confess infinitely to my taste. It is a flattering picture of Bagshot Heath. But then there are the Apennines on one side, and Rome and St. Peter's on the other, and it is intersected by perpetual dells clothed with arbutus and ilex.

Adieu—very faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 15

*Naples, December 22, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have received a letter from you here, dated November 1st; you see the reciprocation of letters from the term of our travels is more slow. I entirely agree with what you say about *Childe Harold*. The spirit in which it is written is, if insane, the most wicked and mischievous insanity that ever was given forth. It is a kind of obstinate and self-willed folly, in which he hardens himself. I remonstrated with him in vain on the tone of mind from which such a view of things alone arises. For its real root is very different from its apparent one. Nothing can be less sublime than the true source of these expressions of contempt and desperation. The fact is, that first, the Italian women with whom he associates, are perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon—the most ignorant, the most disgusting, the most bigoted; countesses smell so strongly of garlic, that an ordinary Englishman cannot approach them. Well, L. B. is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets. He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named, but I

believe seldom even conceived in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and the destiny of man, what can he behold but objects of contempt and despair? But that he is a great poet, I think the address to Ocean<sup>1</sup> proves. And he has a certain degree of candour while you talk to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure. No, I do not doubt, and, for his sake, I ought to hope, that his present career must end soon in some violent circumstance.

Since I last wrote to you, I have seen the ruins of Rome, the Vatican, St. Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient and modern art contained in that majestic city. The impression of it exceeds anything I have ever experienced in my travels. We stayed there only a week, intending to return at the end of February, and devote two or three months to its mines of inexhaustible contemplation, to which period I refer you for a minute account of it. We visited the Forum and the ruins of the Coliseum every day. The Coliseum is unlike any work of human hands I ever saw before. It is of enormous height and circuit, and the arches built of massy stones are piled on one another, and jut into the blue air, shattered into the forms of overhanging rocks. It has been changed by time into the image of an amphitheatre of rocky hills overgrown by the wild olive, the myrtle, and the fig-tree, and threaded by little paths, which wind among its ruined stairs and immeasurable galleries: the copsewood overshadows you as you wander through its labyrinths, and the wild weeds of this climate of flowers bloom under your feet. The arena is covered with grass, and pierces, like the skirts of a natural plain, the chasms of the broken arches around. But a small part of the exterior circumference remains—it is exquisitely light and beautiful; and the effect of the perfection of its architecture, adorned with ranges

<sup>1</sup> *Stanzas CLXXIX-CLXXXIV* of the fourth canto, published early in 1818, of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

of Corinthian pilasters, supporting a bold cornice, is such as to diminish the effect of its greatness. The interior is all ruin. I can scarcely believe that when encrusted with Dorian marble and ornamented by columns of Egyptian granite, its effect could have been so sublime and so impressive as in its present state. It is open to the sky, and it was the clear and sunny weather of the end of November in this climate when we visited it, day after day.

Near it is the arch of Constantine, or rather the arch of Trajan; for the servile and avaricious senate of degraded Rome ordered that the monument of his predecessor should be demolished in order to dedicate one to the Christian reptile, who had crept among the blood of his murdered family to the supreme power. It is exquisitely beautiful and perfect. The Forum is a plain in the midst of Rome, a kind of desert full of heaps of stones and pits, and though so near the habitations of men, is the most desolate place you can conceive. The ruins of temples stand in and around it, shattered columns and ranges of others complete, supporting cornices of exquisite workmanship, and vast vaults of shattered domes distinct with regular compartments, once filled with sculptures of ivory or brass. The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity. In Rome, at least in the first enthusiasm of your recognition of ancient time, you see nothing of the Italians. The nature of the city assists the delusion, for its vast and antique walls describe a circumference of sixteen miles, and thus the population is thinly scattered over this space, nearly as great as London. Wide wild fields are enclosed within it, and there are grassy lanes and copses winding among the ruins, and a great green hill, lonely and bare, which

overhangs the Tiber. The gardens of the modern palaces are like wild woods of cedar, and cypress, and pine, and the neglected walks are overgrown with weeds. The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion.

I have told you little about Rome ; but I reserve the Pantheon, and St. Peter's, and the Vatican, and Raphael, for my return. About a fortnight ago I left Rome, and Mary and Claire followed in three days, for it was necessary to procure lodgings here without alighting at an inn. From my peculiar mode of travelling I saw little of the country, but could just observe that the wild beauty of the scenery and the barbarous ferocity of the inhabitants progressively increased. On entering Naples, the first circumstance that engaged my attention was an assassination. A youth ran out of a shop, pursued by a woman with a bludgeon, and a man armed with a knife. The man overtook him, and with one blow in the neck laid him dead in the road. On my expressing the emotions of horror and indignation which I felt, a Calabrian priest, who travelled with me, laughed heartily, and attempted to quiz me, as what the English call a flat. I never felt such an inclination to beat any one. Heaven knows I have little power, but he saw that I looked extremely displeased, and was silent. This same man, a fellow of gigantic strength and stature, had expressed the most frantic terror of robbers on the road : he cried at the sight of my pistol, and it had been with

great difficulty that the joint exertions of myself and the vetturino had quieted his hysterics.

But external nature in these delightful regions contrasts with and compensates for the deformity and degradation of humanity. We have a lodging divided from the sea by the royal gardens, and from our windows we see perpetually the blue waters of the bay, forever changing, yet forever the same, and encompassed by the mountainous island of Capreae, the lofty peaks which overhang Salerno, and the woody hill of Posilipo, whose promontories hide from us Misenum and the lofty isle Inarime,<sup>1</sup> which, with its divided summit, forms the opposite horn of the bay. From the pleasant walks of the garden we see Vesuvius ; a smoke by day and a fire by night is seen upon its summit, and the glassy sea often reflects its light or shadow. The climate is delicious. We sit without a fire, with the windows open, and have almost all the productions of an English summer. The weather is usually like what Wordsworth calls 'the first fine day of March' ; sometimes very much warmer, though perhaps it wants that 'each minute sweeter than before', which gives an intoxicating sweetness to the awakening of the earth from its winter's sleep in England. We have made two excursions, one to Baiae and one to Vesuvius, and we propose to visit, successively, the islands, Paestum, Pompeii, and Beneventum.

We set off an hour after sunrise one radiant morning in a little boat ; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor a wave upon the sea, which was so translucent that you could see the hollow caverns clothed with the glaucous sea-moss, and the leaves and branches of those delicate weeds that pave the unequal bottom of the water. As noon approached, the heat, and especially the light, became intense. We passed Posilipo, and came first to the eastern point of the bay of Puzzoli, which is within the great bay of Naples, and which again incloses that of Baiae. Here are lofty rocks and craggy islets, with arches and portals of precipice standing in the sea, and

<sup>1</sup> The ancient name of Ischia. [M. S.]

enormous caverns, which echoed faintly with the murmur of the languid tide. This is called *La Scuola di Virgilio*. We then went directly across to the promontory of Misenum, leaving the precipitous island of Nesida on the right. Here we were conducted to see the *Mare Morto*, and the Elysian fields ; the spot on which Virgil places the scenery of the Sixth *Aeneid*. Though extremely beautiful, as a lake, and woody hills, and this divine sky must make it, I confess my disappointment. The guide showed us an antique cemetery, where the niches used for placing the cinerary urns of the dead yet remain. We then coasted the Bay of Baiae to the left, in which we saw many picturesque and interesting ruins ; but I have to remark that we never disembarked but we were disappointed—while from the boat the effect of the scenery was inexpressibly delightful. The colours of the water and the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty. After passing the Bay of Baiae, and observing the ruins of its antique grandeur standing like rocks in the transparent sea under our boat, we landed to visit lake Avernus. We passed through the cavern of the Sibyl (not Virgil's Sybil) which pierces one of the hills which circumscribe the lake, and came to a calm and lovely basin of water, surrounded by dark woody hills, and profoundly solitary. Some vast ruins of the temple of Pluto stand on a lawny hill on one side of it, and are reflected in its windless mirror. It is far more beautiful than the Elysian fields—but there are all the materials for beauty in the latter, and the Avernus was once a chasm of deadly and pestilential vapours. About half a mile from Avernus, a high hill, called Monte Novo, was thrown up by volcanic fire.

Passing onward we came to Pozzoli, the ancient Dicaearchea, where there are the columns remaining of a temple to Serapis, and the wreck of an enormous amphitheatre, changed, like the Coliseum, into a natural hill of the overteeming vegetation. Here also is the Solfatara, of which there is a poetical description in the

*Civil War* of Petronius, beginning—‘Est locus,’ and in which the verses of the poet are infinitely finer than what he describes, for it is not a very curious place. After seeing these things we returned by moonlight to Naples in our boat. What colours there were in the sky, what radiance in the evening star, and how the moon was encompassed by a light unknown to our regions !

Our next excursion was to Vesuvius. We went to Resina in a carriage, where Mary and I mounted mules, and Claire was carried in a chair on the shoulders of four men, much like a Member of Parliament after he has gained his election, and looking, with less reason, quite as frightened. So we arrived at the hermitage of San Salvador, where an old hermit, belted with rope, set forth the plates for our refreshment.

Vesuvius is, after the glaciers, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of nature I ever saw. It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor, above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers ; but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength. From Resina to the hermitage you wind up the mountain, and cross a vast stream of hardened lava, which is an actual image of the waves of the sea, changed into hard black stone by enchantment. The lines of the boiling flood seem to hang in the air, and it is difficult to believe that the billows which seem hurrying down upon you are not actually in motion. This plain was once a sea of liquid fire. From the hermitage we crossed another vast stream of lava, and then went on foot up the cone—this is the only part of the ascent in which there is any difficulty, and that difficulty has been much exaggerated. It is composed of rocks of lava, and declivities of ashes ; by ascending the former and descending the latter, there is very little fatigue. On the summit is a kind of irregular plain, the most horrible chaos that can be imagined ; riven into ghastly chasms, and heaped up with tumuli of great stones and cinders, and enormous rocks blackened and calcined, which had been thrown from the volcano upon

one another in terrible confusion. In the midst stands the conical hill from which volumes of smoke, and the fountains of liquid fire, are rolled forth forever. The mountain is at present in a slight state of eruption ; and a thick heavy white smoke is perpetually rolled out, interrupted by enormous columns of an impenetrable black bituminous vapour, which is hurled up, fold after fold, into the sky with a deep hollow sound, and fiery stones are rained down from its darkness, and a black shower of ashes fell even where we sat. The lava, like the glacier, creeps on perpetually, with a crackling sound as of suppressed fire. There are several springs of lava ; and in one place it rushes<sup>1</sup> precipitously over a high crag, rolling down the half-molten rocks and its own overhanging waves ; a cataract of quivering fire. We approached the extremity of one of the rivers of lava ; it is about twenty feet in breadth and ten in height ; and as the inclined plane was not rapid, its motion was very slow. We saw the masses of its dark exterior surface detach themselves as it moved, and betray the depth of the liquid flame. In the day the fire is but slightly seen ; you only observe a tremulous motion in the air, and streams and fountains of white sulphurous smoke.

At length we saw the sun sink between Capreae and Inarime, and, as the darkness increased, the effect of the fire became more beautiful. We were, as it were, surrounded by streams and cataracts of the red and radiant fire ; and in the midst, from the column of bituminous smoke shot up into the air, fell the vast masses of rock, white with the light of their intense heat, leaving behind them through the dark vapour trains of splendour. We descended by torch-light, and I should have enjoyed the scenery on my return, but they conducted me, I know not how, to the hermitage in a state of intense bodily suffering, the worst effect of which was spoiling the pleasure of Mary and Claire. Our guides on the occasion were complete savages. You have no idea of the

<sup>1</sup> So M. S. and Rhys ; but Garnett and H. B. F. read 'gushes'.

horrible cries which they suddenly utter, no one knows why ; the clamour, the vociferation, the tumult. Claire in her palanquin suffered most from it; and when I had gone on before, they threatened to leave her in the middle of the road, which they would have done had not my Italian servant promised them a beating, after which they became quiet. Nothing, however, can be more picturesque than the gestures and the physiognomies of these savage people. And when, in the darkness of night, they unexpectedly begin to sing in chorus some fragments of their wild but sweet national music, the effect is exceedingly fine.

Since I wrote this, I have seen the museum of this city. Such statues ! There is a Venus ; an ideal shape of the most winning loveliness. A Bacchus, more sublime than any living being. A Satyr, making love to a youth : in which the expressed life of the sculpture, and the inconceivable beauty of the form of the youth, overcome one's repugnance to the subject. There are multitudes of wonderfully fine statues found in Herculaneum and Pompeii. We are going to see Pompeii the first day that the sea is waveless. Herculaneum is almost filled up ; no more excavations are made ; the king bought the ground and built a palace upon it.

You don't see much of Hunt. I wish you could contrive to see him when you go to town, and ask him what he means to answer to Lord Byron's invitation. He has now an opportunity, if he likes, of seeing Italy. What do you think of joining his party, and paying us a visit next year ; I mean as soon as the reign of winter is dissolved ? Write to me your thoughts upon this. I cannot express to you the pleasure it would give me to welcome such a party.

I have depression enough of spirits and not good health, though I believe the warm air of Naples does me good. We see absolutely no one here.

Adieu, my dear Peacock,

Affectionately your friend,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 16

*Naples, Jan. 26th, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Your two letters arrived within a few days of each other, one being directed to Naples, and the other to Livorno. They are more welcome visitors to me than mine can be to you. I writing as from sepulchres, you from the habitations of men yet unburied ; though the sexton, Castlereagh, after having dug their grave, stands with his spade in his hand, evidently doubting whether he will not be forced to occupy it himself. Your news about the bank-note trials is excellent good. Do I not recognize in it the influence of Cobbett ? You don't tell me what occupies Parliament ? I know you will laugh at my demand, and assure me that it is indifferent. Your pamphlet I want exceedingly to see. Your calculations in the letter are clear, but require much oral explanation. You know I am an infernal arithmetician. If none but me had contemplated 'lucentemque globum lunae, Titaniaque astra', the world would yet have doubted whether they were many hundred feet higher than the mountain tops.

In my accounts of pictures and things, I am more pleased to interest you than the many ; and this is fortunate, because, in the first place, I have no idea of attempting the latter, and if I did attempt it, I should assuredly fail. A perception of the beautiful characterizes those who differ from ordinary men, and those who can perceive it would not buy enough to pay the printer. Besides, I keep no journal, and the only records of my voyage will be the letters I send you. The bodily fatigue of standing for hours in galleries exhausts me ; I believe that I don't see half that I ought, on that account. And then we know nobody, and the common Italians are so sullen and stupid, it's impossible to get information from them. At Rome, where the people seem superior to any in Italy, I cannot fail to stumble on

something more. O, if I had health, and strength, and equal spirits, what boundless intellectual improvement might I not gather in this wonderful country! At present I write little else but poetry, and little of that. My first act of Prometheus is complete, and I think you would like it. I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter, for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt, and I shall be content, by exercising my fancy, to amuse myself, and perhaps some others, and cast what weight I can into the scale of that balance, which the Giant of Arthegall holds.<sup>1</sup>

Since you last heard from me, we have been to see Pompeii, and are waiting now for the return of spring weather, to visit, first, Paestum, and then the islands; after which we shall return to Rome. I was astonished at the remains of this city; I had no conception of anything so perfect yet remaining. My idea of the mode of its destruction was this:—First, an earthquake shattered it, and unroofed almost all its temples, and split its columns; then a rain of light, small pumice-stones fell; then torrents of boiling water, mixed with ashes, filled up all its crevices. A wide, flat hill, from

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to the *Fairy Queen*, book v, canto 3. The Giant has scales, in which he professes to weigh right and wrong, and rectify the physical and moral evils which result from inequality of condition. Shelley once pointed out this passage to me, observing, ‘Artegall argues with the Giant; the Giant has the best of the argument; Artegall’s iron man knocks him over into the sea and drowns him. This is the usual way in which power deals with opinion.’ I said, ‘That was not the lesson which Spenser intended to convey.’ ‘Perhaps not,’ he said; ‘it is the lesson which he conveys to me. I am of the Giant’s faction.’

In the same feeling, with respect to Thomson’s *Castle of Indolence*, he held that the Enchanter in the first canto was a true philanthropist, and the Knight of Arts and Industry in the second an oligarchical impostor overthrowing truth by power.  
[T. L. P.]

which the city was excavated, is now covered by thick woods, and you see the tombs and the theatres, the temples and the houses, surrounded by the uninhabited wilderness. We entered the town from the side towards the sea, and first saw two theatres ; one more magnificent than the other, strewn with the ruins of the white marble which formed their seats and cornices, wrought with deep, bold sculpture. In the front, between the stage and the seats, is the circular space occasionally occupied by the chorus. The stage is very narrow, but long, and divided from this space by a narrow enclosure parallel to it, I suppose for the orchestra. On each side are the consuls' boxes, and below, in the theatre at Herculaneum, were found two equestrian statues of admirable workmanship, occupying the same place as the great bronze lamps did at Drury Lane. The smallest of the theatres is said to have been comic, though I should doubt. From both you see, as you sit on the seats, a prospect of the most wonderful beauty.

You then pass through the ancient streets ; they are very narrow, and the houses rather small, but all constructed on an admirable plan, especially for this climate. The rooms are built round a court, or sometimes two, according to the extent of the house. In the midst is a fountain, sometimes surrounded with a portico, supported on fluted columns of white stucco ; the floor is paved with mosaic, sometimes wrought in imitation of vine leaves, sometimes in quaint figures, and more or less beautiful, according to the rank of the inhabitant. There were paintings on all, but most of them have been removed to decorate the royal museums. Little winged figures, and small ornaments of exquisite elegance, yet remain. There is an ideal life in the forms of these paintings of an incomparable loveliness, though most are evidently the work of very inferior artists. It seems as if, from the atmosphere of mental beauty which surrounded them, every human being caught a splendour not his own. In one house you see how the bedrooms were managed ;—a small sofa was built up, where the

cushions were placed; two pictures, one representing Diana and Endymion, the other Venus and Mars, decorate the chamber; and a little niche, which contains the statue of a domestic god. The floor is composed of a rich mosaic of the rarest marbles, agate, jasper, and porphyry; it looks to the marble fountain and the snow-white columns, whose entablatures strew the floor of the portico they supported. The houses have only one storey, and the apartments, though not large, are very lofty. A great advantage results from this, wholly unknown in our cities. The public buildings, whose ruins are now forests, as it were, of white fluted columns, and which then supported entablatures, loaded with sculptures, were seen on all sides over the roofs of the houses. This was the excellence of the ancients. Their private expenses were comparatively moderate; the dwelling of one of the chief senators of Pompeii is elegant indeed, and adorned with most beautiful specimens of art, but small. But their public buildings are everywhere marked by the bold and grand designs of an unsparing magnificence. In the little town of Pompeii (it contained about twenty thousand inhabitants), it is wonderful to see the number and the grandeur of their public buildings. Another advantage, too, is that, in the present case, the glorious scenery around is not shut out, and that, unlike the inhabitants of the Cimmerian ravines of modern cities, the ancient Pompeians could contemplate the clouds and the lamps of heaven; could see the moon rise high behind Vesuvius, and the sun set in the sea, tremulous with an atmosphere of golden vapour, between Inarime and Misenum.

Wenextsaw the temples. Of the temple of Aesculapius little remains but an altar of black stone, adorned with a cornice imitating the scales of a serpent. His statue, in terra-cotta, was found in the cell. The temple of Isis is more perfect. It is surrounded by a portico of fluted columns, and in the area around it are two altars, and many ceppi for statues; and a little chapel of white stucco, as hard as stone, of the most exquisite proportion;

its panels are adorned with figures in bas-relief, slightly indicated, but of a workmanship the most delicate and perfect that can be conceived. They are Egyptian subjects, executed by a Greek artist, who has harmonized all the unnatural extravagances of the original conception into the supernatural loveliness of his country's genius. They scarcely touch the ground with their feet, and their wind-uplifted robes seem in the place of wings. The temple in the midst, raised on a high platform, and approached by steps, was decorated with exquisite paintings, some of which we saw in the museum at Portici. It is small, of the same materials as the chapel, with a pavement of mosaic, and fluted Ionic columns of white stucco, so white that it dazzles you to look at it.

Thence through other porticos and labyrinths of walls and columns (for I cannot hope to detail everything to you), we came to the Forum. This is a large square, surrounded by lofty porticos of fluted columns, some broken, some entire, their entablatures strewed under them. The temple of Jupiter, of Venus, and another temple, the Tribunal, and the Hall of Public Justice, with their forests of lofty columns, surround the Forum. Two pedestals or altars of an enormous size (for, whether they supported equestrian statues, or were the altars of the temple of Venus, before which they stand, the guide could not tell), occupy the lower end of the Forum. At the upper end, supported on an elevated platform, stands the temple of Jupiter. Under the colonnade of its portico we sate, and pulled out our oranges, and figs, and bread, and medlars (sorry fare, you will say), and rested to eat. Here was a magnificent spectacle. Above and between the multitudinous shafts of the sun-shining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. To the right was Capreae, Inarime, Prochyta, and Misenum.

Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames, with the sullen and tremendous sound. This scene was what the Greeks beheld (Pompeii, you know, was a Greek city). They lived in harmony with nature; and the interstices of their incomparable columns were portals, as it were, to admit the spirit of beauty which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired. If such is Pompeii, what was Athens? What scene was exhibited from the Acropolis, the Parthenon, and the temples of Hercules, and Theseus, and the Winds? The islands and the Aegean sea, the mountains of Argolis, and the peaks of Pindus and Olympus, and the darkness of the Boeotian forests interspersed?

From the Forum we went to another public place; a triangular portico, half enclosing the ruins of an enormous temple. It is built on the edge of the hill overlooking the sea.  $\wedge$  That black point is the temple. In the apex of the triangle stands an altar and a fountain, and before the altar once stood the statue of the builder of the portico. Returning hence, and following the consular road, we came to the eastern gate of the city. The walls are of enormous strength, and inclose a space of three miles. On each side of the road beyond the gate are built the tombs. How unlike ours! They seem not so much hiding-places for that which must decay, as voluptuous chambers for immortal spirits. They are of marble, radiantly white; and two, especially beautiful, are loaded with exquisite bas-reliefs. On the stucco-wall that incloses them are little emblematic figures, of a relief exceedingly low, of dead and dying animals, and

little winged genii, and female forms bending in groups in some funeral office. The higher reliefs represent, one a nautical subject, and the other a Bacchanalian one. Within the cell stand the cinerary urns, sometimes one, sometimes more. It is said that paintings were found within ; which are now, as has been everything movable in Pompeii, removed, and scattered about in royal museums. These tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side ; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them, you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of the inconstant wind, as it were, like the step of ghosts. The radiance and magnificence of these dwellings of the dead, the white freshness of the scarcely finished marble, the impassioned or imaginative life of the figures which adorn them, contrast strangely with the simplicity of the houses of those who were living when Vesuvius overwhelmed them.

I have forgotten the amphitheatre, which is of great magnitude, though much inferior to the Coliseum. I now understand why the Greeks were such great poets : and, above all, I can account, it seems to me, for the harmony, the unity, the perfection, the uniform excellence, of all their works of art. They lived in a perpetual commerce with external nature, and nourished themselves upon the spirit of its forms. Their theatres were all open to the mountains and the sky. Their columns, the ideal types of a sacred forest, with its roof of interwoven tracery, admitted the light and wind ; the odour and the freshness of the country penetrated the cities. Their temples were mostly upaithric ; and the flying clouds, the stars, or the deep sky, were seen above. O, but for that series of wretched wars which terminated in the Roman conquest of the world ; but for the Christian religion, which put the finishing stroke on the ancient system ; but for those changes that conducted Athens to its ruin—to what an eminence might not humanity have arrived !

In a short time I hope to tell you something of the museum of this city.

You see how ill I follow the maxim of Horace, at least in its literal sense : ‘nil admirari’—which I should say, ‘prope res est una’—to prevent there ever being anything admirable in the world. Fortunately Plato is of my opinion ; and I had rather err with Plato than be right with Horace.

At this moment I have received your letter, indicating that you are removing to London. I am very much interested in the subject of this change, and beg you would write me all the particulars of it. You will be able now to give me perhaps a closer insight into the politics of the times than was permitted you at Marlow. Of H—— I have a very slight opinion. There are rumours here of a revolution in Spain. A ship came in twelve days from Catalonia, and brought a report that the king was massacred ; that eighteen thousand insurgents surrounded Madrid ; but that before the popular party gained head enough seven thousand were murdered by the Inquisition. Perhaps you know all by this time. The old king of Spain is dead here. Cobbett is a fine *ἰμενοποιος*—does his influence increase or diminish ? What a pity that so powerful a genius should be combined with the most odious moral qualities.

We have reports here of a change in the English ministry—to what does it amount ? for, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the chancery court.

I suppose now we shall not see you in Italy this spring, whether Hunt comes or not. It’s probable I shall hear nothing from him for some months, particularly if he does not come. Give me *ses nouvelles*.

I am under an English surgeon here, who says I have a disease of the liver, which he will cure. We keep horses, as this kind of exercise is absolutely essential to my health. Elise<sup>1</sup> has just married our Italian

<sup>1</sup> A Swiss girl whom we had engaged as nursery-maid two years before, at Geneva. [M. S.]

servant, and has quitted us ; the man was a great rascal, and cheated enormously : this event was very much against our advice.

I have scarcely been out since I wrote last.

Adieu ! yours most faithfully,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 17

*Naples, February 25th, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I am much interested to hear your progress in the object of your removal to London, especially as I hear from Horace Smith of the advantages attending it. There is no person in the world who would more sincerely rejoice in any good fortune that might befall you than I should.

We are on the point of quitting Naples for Rome. The scenery which surrounds this city is more delightful than any within the immediate reach of civilized man. I don't think I have mentioned to you the Lago d'Agnano and the Caccia d'Ischieri, and I have since seen what obscures those lovely forms in my memory. They are both the craters of extinguished volcanoes, and nature has thrown forth forests of oak and ilex, and spread mossy lawns and clear lakes over the dead or sleeping fire. The first is a scene of a wider and milder character, with soft sloping, wooded hills, and grassy declivities declining to the lake, and cultivated plains of vines woven upon poplar trees, bounded by the theatre of hills. Innumerable wild water-birds, quite tame, inhabit this place. The other is a royal chace, is surrounded by steep and lofty hills, and only accessible through a wide gate of massy oak, from the vestibule of which the spectacle of precipitous hills, hemming in a narrow and circular vale, is suddenly disclosed. The hills are covered with thick woods of ilex, myrtle, and laurustinus ; the polished leaves of the ilex, as they wave in their

multitudes under the partial blasts which rush through the chasms of the vale, glitter above the dark masses of foliage below, like the white foam of waves upon a deep blue sea. The plain so surrounded is at most three miles in circumference. It is occupied partly by a lake, with bold shores wooded by evergreens, and interrupted by a sylvan promontory of the wild forest, whose mossy boughs overhang its expanse, of a silent and purple darkness, like an Italian midnight ; and partly by the forest itself, of all gigantic trees, but the oak especially, whose jagged boughs, now leafless, are hoary with thick lichens, and loaded with the massy and deep foliage of the ivy. The effect of the dark eminences that surround this plain, seen through the boughs, is of an enchanting solemnity. (There we saw in one instance wild boars and a deer, and in another—a spectacle little suited to the antique and Latonian nature of the place—King Ferdinand in a winter enclosure, watching to shoot wild boars.) The underwood was principally evergreen, all lovely kinds of fern and furze ; the cytisus, a delicate kind of furze with a pretty yellow blossom, the myrtle, and the myrica. The willow trees had just begun to put forth their green and golden buds, and gleamed like points of lambent fire among the wintry forest. The Grotta del Cane, too, we saw, because other people see it ; but would not allow the dog to be exhibited in torture for our curiosity. The poor little animals<sup>1</sup> stood moving their tails in a slow and dismal manner, as if perfectly resigned to their condition—a cur-like emblem of voluntary servitude. The effect of the vapour, which extinguishes a torch, is to cause suffocation at last, through a process which makes the lungs feel as if they were torn by sharp points within. So a surgeon told us, who tried the experiment on himself.

There was a Greek city, sixty miles to the south of Naples, called Posidonia, now Pesto, where there still

<sup>1</sup> Several dogs are kept for exhibition, but only one is exhibited at a time. [T. L. P.]

subsist three temples of Etruscan<sup>1</sup> architecture, still perfect. From this city we have just returned. The weather was most unfavourable for our expedition. After two months of cloudless serenity, it began raining cats and dogs. The first night we slept at Salerno, a large city situate in the recess of a deep bay ; surrounded with stupendous mountains of the same name. A few miles from Torre del Greco we entered on the pass of the mountains, which is a line dividing the isthmus of those enormous piles of rock which compose the southern boundary of the Bay of Naples, and the northern one of that of Salerno. On one side is a lofty conical hill, crowned with the turrets of a ruined castle, and cut into platforms for cultivation ; at least every ravine and glen, whose precipitous sides admitted of other vegetation but that of the rock-rooted ilex : on the other, the aethereal snowy crags of an immense mountain, whose terrible lineaments were at intervals concealed or disclosed by volumes of dense clouds rolling under the tempest. Half a mile from this spot, between orange and lemon groves of a lovely village, suspended as it were on an amphitheatral precipice, whose golden globes contrasted with the white walls and dark green leaves which they almost outnumbered, shone the sea. A burst of the declining sunlight illumined it. The road led along the brink of the precipice, towards Salerno. Nothing could be more glorious than the scene. The immense mountains covered with the rare and divine vegetation of this climate, with many-folding vales, and deep dark recesses which the fancy scarcely could penetrate, descended from their snowy summits precipitously to the sea. Before us was Salerno, built into a declining plain, between the mountains and the sea. Beyond, the other shore of sky-cleaving mountains, then dim with the mist of tempest. Underneath, from the base of the precipice where the road conducted, rocky promontories jutted

<sup>1</sup> The architecture is Doric. [T. L. P.]

into the sea, covered with olive and ilex woods, or with the ruined battlements of some Norman or Saracenic fortress. We slept at Salerno, and the next morning, before daybreak, proceeded to Posidonia. The night had been tempestuous, and our way lay by the sea sand. It was utterly dark, except when the long line of wave burst, with a sound like thunder, beneath the starless sky, and cast up a kind of mist of cold white lustre. When morning came, we found ourselves travelling in a wide desert plain, perpetually interrupted by wild irregular glens, and bounded on all sides by the Apennines and the sea. Sometimes it was covered with forest, sometimes dotted with underwood, or mere tufts of fern and furze, and the wintry dry tendrils of creeping plants. I have never, but in the Alps, seen an amphitheatre of mountains so magnificent. After travelling fifteen miles, we came to a river, the bridge of which had been broken, and which was so swollen that the ferry would not take the carriage across. We had, therefore, to walk seven miles of a muddy road, which led to the ancient city across the desolate Maremma. The air was scented with the sweet smell of violets of an extraordinary size and beauty. At length we saw the sublime and massy colonnades, skirting the horizon of the wilderness. We entered by the ancient gate, which is now no more than a chasm in the rock-like wall. Deeply sunk in the ground beside it were the ruins of a sepulchre, which the ancients were in the custom of building beside the public way. The first temple, which is the smallest, consists of an outer range of columns, quite perfect, and supporting a perfect architrave and two shattered frontispieces.<sup>1</sup> The proportions are extremely massy, and the architecture entirely unornamented and simple. These columns do not seem more than forty feet high,<sup>2</sup> but the perfect

<sup>1</sup> The three temples are amphiprostyle; that is, they have two prospects or fronts, each of six columns in the two first, and of nine in the Basilica. See Major's *Ruins of Paestum*. 1768. [T.L.P.]

<sup>2</sup> The height of the columns is respectively 18 feet 6 inches,

proportions diminish the apprehension of their magnitude ; it seems as if inequality and irregularity of form were requisite to force on us the relative idea of greatness. The scene from between the columns of the temple consists on one side of the sea, to which the gentle hill on which it is built slopes, and on the other, of the grand amphitheatre of the loftiest Apennines, dark purple mountains, crowned with snow, and intersected there by long bars of hard and leaden-coloured cloud. The effect of the jagged outline of mountains, through groups of enormous columns on one side, and on the other the level horizon of the sea, is inexpressibly grand. The second temple is much larger, and also more perfect. Beside the outer range of columns, it contains an interior range of column above column, and the ruins of a wall which was the screen of the penetralia. With little diversity of ornament, the order of architecture is similar to that of the first temple. The columns in all are fluted, and built of a porous volcanic stone, which time has dyed with a rich and yellow colour. The columns are one-third larger, and like that of the first, diminish from the base to the capital, so that, but for the chastening effect of their admirable proportions, their magnitude would, from the delusion of perspective, seem greater, not less, than it is ; though perhaps we ought to say, not that this symmetry diminishes your apprehension of their magnitude, but that it overpowers the idea of relative greatness, by establishing within itself a system of relations destructive of your idea of its relation with other objects, on which our ideas of size depend. The third temple is what they call a Basilica ; three columns alone remain of the interior range ; the exterior is perfect, but that the cornice and frieze in many places have fallen. This temple covers more ground than either of the others, but its columns are of

and 28 feet 5 inches and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lines, in the two first temples ; and 21 feet 6 inches in the Basilica. This shows the justice of the remarks on the difference of real and apparent magnitude.  
[T. L. P.]

an intermediate magnitude between those of the second and the first.

We only contemplated these sublime monuments for two hours, and of course could only bring away so imperfect a conception of them as is the shadow of some half-remembered dream.

The royal collection of paintings in this city is sufficiently miserable. Perhaps the most remarkable is the original studio by Michael Angelo, of the 'Day of Judgement', which is painted in fresco on the Sixtine chapel of the Vatican. It is there so defaced as to be wholly indistinguishable. I cannot but think the genius of this artist highly overrated. He has not only no temperance, no modesty, no feeling for the just boundaries of art (and in these respects an admirable genius may err), but he has no sense of beauty, and to want this is to want the sense of the creative power of mind. What is terror without a contrast with, and a connexion with, loveliness. How well Dante understood this secret—Dante, with whom this artist has been so presumptuously compared! What a thing his 'Moses' is; how distorted from all that is natural and majestic, only less monstrous and detestable than its historical prototype. In the picture to which I allude, God is leaning out of heaven, as it were eagerly enjoying the final scene of the infernal tragedy he set the Universe to act. The Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, is under Him. Under the Holy Ghost stands Jesus Christ, in an attitude of haranguing the assembly. This figure, which his subject, or rather the view which it became him to take of it, ought to have modelled of a calm, severe, awe-inspiring majesty, terrible yet lovely, is in the attitude of commonplace resentment. On one side of this figure are the elect; on the other, the host of heaven; they ought to have been what the Christians call *glorified bodies*, floating onward and radiant with that everlasting light (I speak in the spirit of their faith), which had consumed their mortal veil. They are in fact very ordinary people. Below is the ideal

purgatory, I imagine, in mid-air, in the shapes of spirits, some of whom daemons are dragging down, others falling as it were by their own weight, others half suspended in that Mahomet-coffin kind of attitude which most moderate Christians, I believe, expect to assume. Every step towards hell approximates to the region of the artist's exclusive power. There is great imagination in many of the situations of these unfortunate spirits. But hell and death are his real sphere. The bottom of the picture is divided by a lofty rock, in which there is a cavern whose entrance is thronged by devils, some coming in with spirits, some going out for prey. The blood-red light of the fiery abyss glows through their dark forms. On one side are the devils in all hideous forms, struggling with the damned, who have received their sentence at the redeemer's throne, and chained in all forms of agony by knotted serpents, and writhing on the crags in every variety of torture. On the other, are the dead coming out of their graves—horrible forms. Such is the famous 'Day of Judgement' of Michael Angelo; a kind of *Titus Andronicus* in painting, but the author surely no Shakespeare. The other paintings are one or two of Raphael or his pupils, very sweet and lovely. A 'Danæ' of Titian, a picture, the softest and most voluptuous form, with languid and uplifted eyes, and warm yet passive limbs. A 'Madde-lena', by Guido, with dark brown hair, and dark brown eyes, and an earnest, soft, melancholy look. And some excellent pictures, in point of execution, by Annibal Carracci. None others worth a second look. Of the gallery of statues I cannot speak. They require a volume, not a letter. Still less what can I do at Rome?

I have just seen the *Quarterly* for September (not from my own box). I suppose there is no chance now of your organizing a review! This is a great pity. The *Quarterly* is undoubtedly conducted with talent, great talent, and affords a dreadful preponderance against the cause of improvement. If a band of staunch reformers, resolute yet skilful infidels, were united in so close and

constant a league<sup>1</sup> as that in which interest and fanaticism have bound the members of that literary coalition!

Adieu. Address your next letter to Rome, whence you shall hear from me soon again. Mary and Clara unite with me in the very kindest remembrances. Most faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

A doctor here has been messing me, and I believe has done me an important benefit. One of his pretty schemes has been putting caustic on my side. You may guess how much quiet I have had since it was laid on. . . .

### LETTER 18

*Rome, March 23rd, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I wrote to you the day before our departure from Naples. We came by slow journeys, with our own horses, to Rome, resting one day at Mola di Gaeta, at the inn called Villa di Cicerone, from being built on the ruins of his Villa, whose immense substructions overhang the sea, and are scattered among the orange-groves. Nothing can be lovelier than the scene from the terraces of the inn. On one side precipitous mountains, whose bases slope into an inclined plane of olive and orange-copses—the latter forming, as it were, an emerald sky of leaves, starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit, whose rich splendour contrasted with the deep green foliage; on the other the sea—bounded on one side by the antique town of Gaeta, and the other by what appears to be an island, the promontory of Circe. From Gaeta to Terracina the whole scenery is of the most sublime character. At Terracina preci-

<sup>1</sup> This was the idea which was subsequently intended to be carried out in the *Liberal*. [T. L. P.]

pitous conical crags of immense height shoot into the sky and overhang the sea. At Albano we arrived again in sight of Rome. Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome. And what shall I say to you of Rome? If I speak of the inanimate ruins, the rude stones piled upon stones, which are the sepulchres of the fame of those who once arrayed them with the beauty which has faded, will you believe me insensible to the vital, the almost breathing creations of genius yet subsisting in their perfection? What has become, you will ask, of the Apollo, the Gladiator, the Venus of the Capitol? What of the Apollo di Belvedere, the Laocoön? What of Raphael and Guido? These things are best spoken of when the mind has drunk in the spirit of their forms; and little indeed can I, who must devote no more than a few months to the contemplation of them, hope to know or feel of their profound beauty.

I think I told you of the Coliseum, and its impressions on me on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity, considered as a ruin, is the Thermae of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above 200 feet in height, and each enclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are, in addition, a number of towers and labyrinthine recesses, hidden and woven over by the wild growth of weeds and ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. The perpendicular walls resemble nothing more than that

cliff of Bisham wood, that is overgrown with wood, and yet is stony and precipitous—you know the one I mean; not the chalk-pit, but the spot that has the pretty copse of fir-trees and privet-bushes at its base, and where H—— and I scrambled up, and you, to my infinite discontent, would go home. These walls surround green and level spaces of lawn, on which some elms have grown, and which are interspersed towards their skirts by masses of the fallen ruin, overtwined with the broad leaves of the creeping weeds. The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls.

But the most interesting effect remains. In one of the buttresses, that supports an immense and lofty arch, which ‘bridges the very winds of heaven’, are the crumbling remains of an antique winding staircase, whose sides are open in many places to the precipice. This you ascend, and arrive on the summit of these piles. There grow on every side thick entangled wildernesses of myrtle, and the myrletus, and bay, and the flowering laurestinus, whose white blossoms are just developed, the white fig, and a thousand nameless plants sown by the wandering winds. These woods are intersected on every side by paths, like sheep-tracks through the copse-wood of steep mountains, which wind to every part of the immense labyrinth. From the midst rise those pinnacles and masses, themselves like mountains, which have been seen from below. In one place you wind along a narrow strip of weed-grown ruin: on one side is the immensity of earth and sky, on the other a narrow chasm, which is bounded by an arch of enormous size, fringed by the many-coloured foliage and blossoms, and supporting a lofty and irregular pyramid, overgrown like itself with the all-prevailing vegetation. Around rise other crags and other peaks, all arrayed, and the deformity of their vast desolation softened down, by the undecaying investiture of nature. Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered; which words cannot convey. Still further,

winding up one-half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copse-wood, you come to a little mossy lawn, surrounded by the wild shrubs ; it is overgrown with anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers, whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour, which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music. The paths still wind on, threading the perplexed windings, other labyrinths, other lawns, and deep dells of wood, and lofty rocks, and terrific chasms. When I tell you that these ruins cover several acres, and that the paths above penetrate at least half their extent, your imagination will fill up all that I am unable to express of this astonishing scene.

I speak of these things not in the order in which I visited them, but in that of the impression which they made on me, or perhaps chance directs. The ruins of the ancient Forum are so far fortunate that they have not been walled up in the modern city. They stand in an open, lonesome place, bounded on one side by the modern city, and the other by the Palatine Mount, covered with shapeless masses of ruin. The tourists tell you all about these things, and I am afraid of stumbling on their language when I enumerate what is so well known. There remain eight granite columns of the Ionic order, with their entablature, of the temple of Concord, founded by Camillus. I fear that the immense expense demanded by these columns forbids us to hope that they are the remains of any edifice dedicated by that most perfect and virtuous of men. It is supposed to have been repaired under the Eastern Emperors ; alas, what a contrast of recollections ! Near them stand three Corinthian fluted columns, which supported the angle of a temple ; the architrave and entablature are worked with delicate sculpture. Beyond, to the south, is another solitary column ; and still more distant, three more, supporting the wreck of an entablature.

Descending from the Capitol to the Forum, is the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus, less perfect than that of Constantine, though from its proportions and magnitude a most impressive monument. That of Constantine, or rather of Titus (for the relief and sculpture, and even the colossal images of Dacian captives, were torn by a decree of the senate from an arch dedicated to the latter, to adorn that of this stupid and wicked monster, Constantine, one of whose chief merits consists in establishing a religion, the destroyer of those arts which would have rendered so base a spoliation unnecessary), is the most perfect. It is an admirable work of art. It is built of the finest marble, and the outline of the reliefs is in many parts as perfect as if just finished. Four Corinthian fluted columns support, on each side, a bold entablature, whose bases are loaded with reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation and slavery. The compartments above express in bolder relief the enjoyment of success ; the conqueror on his throne, or in his chariot, or nodding over the crushed multitudes, who writhe under his horses' hoofs, as those below express the torture and abjectness of defeat. There are three arches, whose roofs are panelled with fretwork, and their sides adorned with similar reliefs. The keystone of these arches is supported each by two winged figures of Victory, whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed, and whose arms are outstretched, bearing trophies, as if impatient to meet. They look, as it were, borne from the subject extremities of the earth, on the breath which is the exhalation of that battle and desolation, which it is their mission to commemorate. Never were monuments so completely fitted to the purpose for which they were designed, of expressing that mixture of energy and error which is called a triumph.

I walk forth in the purple and golden light of an Italian evening, and return by star or moonlight, through this scene. The elms are just budding, and the warm spring winds bring unknown odours, all sweet, from the country. I see the radiant Orion through the mighty

columns of the temple of Concord, and the mellow fading light softens down the modern buildings of the Capitol, the only ones that interfere with the sublime desolation of the scene. On the steps of the Capitol itself, stand two colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, each with his horse, finely executed, though far inferior to those of Monte Cavallo, the cast of one of which you know we saw together in London. This walk is close to our lodging, and this is my evening walk.

What shall I say of the modern city? Rome is yet the capital of the world. It is a city of palaces and temples, more glorious than those which any other city contains, and of ruins more glorious than they. Seen from any of the eminences that surround it, it exhibits domes beyond domes, and palaces, and colonnades interminably, even to the horizon; interspersed with patches of desert, and mighty ruins which stand girt by their own desolation, in the midst of the fanes of living religions and the habitations of living men, in sublime loneliness. St. Peter's is, as you have heard, the loftiest building in Europe. Externally it is inferior in architectural beauty to St Paul's, though not wholly devoid of it; internally it exhibits littleness on a large scale, and is in every respect opposed to antique taste. You know my propensity to admire; and I tried to persuade myself out of this opinion—in vain; the more I see of the interior of St. Peter's, the less impression as a whole does it produce on me. I cannot even think it lofty, though its dome is considerably higher than any hill within fifty miles of London; and when one reflects, it is an astonishing monument of the daring energy of man. Its colonnade is wonderfully fine, and there are two fountains, which rise in spire-like columns of water to an immense height in the sky, and falling on the porphyry vases from which they spring, fill the whole air with a radiant mist, which at noon is thronged with innumerable rainbows. In the midst stands an obelisk. In front is the palace-like façade of St. Peter's, certainly magnificent; and there is produced, on the whole, an

architectural combination unequalled in the world. But the dome of the temple is concealed, except at a very great distance, by the façade and the inferior part of the building, and that diabolical contrivance they call an attic.

The effect of the Pantheon is totally the reverse of that of St. Peter's. Though not a fourth part of the size, it is, as it were, the visible image of the universe ; in the perfection of its proportions, as when you regard the unmeasured dome of heaven, the idea of magnitude is swallowed up and lost. It is open to the sky, and its wide dome is lighted by the ever-changing illumination of the air. The clouds of noon fly over it, and at night the keen stars are seen through the azure darkness, hanging immovably, or driving after the driving moon among the clouds. We visited it by moonlight ; it is supported by sixteen columns, fluted and Corinthian, of a certain rare and beautiful yellow marble, exquisitely polished, called here *giallo antico*. Above these are the niches for the statues of the twelve gods. This is the only defect of this sublime temple ; there ought to have been no interval between the commencement of the dome and the cornice, supported by the columns. Thus there would have been no diversion from the magnificent simplicity of its form. This improvement is alone wanting to have completed the unity of the idea.

The fountains of Rome are, in themselves, magnificent combinations of art, such as alone it were worth coming to see. That in the Piazza Navona, a large square, is composed of enormous fragments of rock, piled on each other, and penetrated, as by caverns. This mass supports an Egyptian obelisk of immense height. On the four corners of the rock recline, in different attitudes, colossal figures representing the four divisions of the globe. The water bursts from the crevices beneath them. They are sculptured with great spirit ; one impatiently tearing a veil from his eyes ; another with his hands stretched upwards. The Fontana di Trevi is the most

celebrated, and is rather a waterfall than a fountain ; gushing out from masses of rock, with a gigantic figure of Neptune ; and below are two river gods, checking two winged horses, struggling up from among the rocks and waters. The whole is not ill-conceived nor executed ; but you know not how delicate the imagination becomes by dieting with antiquity day after day ! The only things that sustain the comparison are Raphael, Guido, and Salvator Rosa.

The fountain on the Quirinal, or rather the group formed by the statues, obelisk, and the fountain, is, however, the most admirable of all. From the Piazza Quirinale, or rather Monte Cavallo, you see the boundless ocean of domes, spires, and columns, which is the City, Rome. On a pedestal of white marble rises an obelisk of red granite, piercing the blue sky. Before it is a vast basin of porphyry, in the midst of which rises a column of the purest water, which collects into itself all the overhanging colours of the sky, and breaks them into a thousand prismatic hues and graduated shadows—they fall together with its dashing water-drops into the outer basin. The elevated situation of this fountain produces, I imagine, this effect of colour. On each side, on an elevated pedestal, stand the statues of Castor and Pollux, each in the act of taming his horse, which are said, but I believe wholly without authority, to be the work of Phidias and Praxiteles. These figures combine the irresistible energy with the sublime and perfect loveliness supposed to have belonged to their divine nature. The reins no longer exist, but the position of their hands and the sustained and calm command of their regard, seem to require no mechanical aid to enforce obedience. The countenances at so great a height are scarcely visible, and I have a better idea of that of which we saw a cast together in London, than of the other. But the sublime and living majesty of their limbs and mien, the nervous and fiery animation of the horses they restrain, seen in the blue sky of Italy, and overlooking the city of Rome, surrounded by the light

and the music of that crystalline fountain, no cast can communicate.

These figures were found at the Baths of Constantine, but, of course, are of remote antiquity. I do not acquiesce however in the practice of attributing to Phidias, or Praxiteles, or Scopas, or some great master, any admirable work that may be found. We find little of what remained, and perhaps the works of these were such as greatly surpassed all that we conceive of most perfect and admirable in what little has escaped the *deluge*. If I am too jealous of the honour of the Greeks, our masters, and creators, the gods whom we should worship—pardon me.

I have said what I feel without entering into any critical discussions of the *ruins* of Rome, and the mere outside of this inexhaustible mine of thought and feeling. Hobhouse, Eustace, and Forsyth, will tell all the show-knowledge about it—‘the common stuff of the earth.’ By the by, Forsyth is worth reading, as I judge from a chapter or two I have seen. I cannot get the book here.

I ought to have observed that the central arch of the triumphal arch of Titus yet subsists, more perfect in its proportions, they say, than any of a later date. This I did not remark. The figures of Victory, with unfolded wings, and each spurning back a globe with outstretched feet, are, perhaps, more beautiful than those on either of the others. Their lips are parted : a delicate mode of indicating the fervour of their desire to arrive at the destined resting-place, and to express the eager respiration of their speed. Indeed, so essential to beauty were the forms expressive of the exercise of the imagination and the affections considered by *Greek* artists, that no ideal figure of antiquity, not destined to some representation directly exclusive of such a character, is to be found with closed lips. Within this arch are two panelled alto-relievos, one representing a train of people bearing in procession the instruments of Jewish worship, among which is the holy candlestick with seven branches ; on

the other, Titus standing in a quadriga, with a winged Victory. The grouping of the horses, and the beauty, correctness, and energy of their delineation, is remarkable, though they are much destroyed.

## LETTER 19

*Rome, April 6th, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I sent you yesterday a long letter, all about antique Rome, which you had better keep for some leisure day. I received yours, and one of Hunt's, yesterday.—So, you know the B—s? I could not help considering Mrs. B.<sup>1</sup>, when I knew her, as the most admirable specimen of a human being I had ever seen. Nothing earthly ever appeared to me more perfect than her character and manners. It is improbable that I shall ever meet again the person whom I so much esteemed, and still admire. I wish, however, that when you see her, you would tell her that I have not forgotten her, nor any of the amiable circle once assembled round her; and that I desired such remembrances to her as an exile and a *Pariah* may be permitted to address to an acknowledged member of the community of mankind. I hear they dined at your lodgings. But no mention of A—and his wife—where were they? C—<sup>2</sup>, though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellencies; and, certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable, and more sincere. It was hardly possible for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. B—'s understanding and affections, to be quite sincere and constant.

I am all anxiety about your I. H.<sup>3</sup> affair. There are few who will feel more hearty satisfaction at your success, in this or any other enterprise, than I shall. Pray let me have the earliest intelligence.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. de Boinville.

<sup>2</sup> Cornelia.

<sup>3</sup> India House.

When shall I return to England? The Pythia has ascended the tripod, but she replies not. Our present plans—and I know not what can induce us to alter them—lead us back to Naples in a month or six weeks, where it is almost decided that we should remain until the commencement of 1820. You may imagine, when we receive such letters as yours and Hunt's, what this resolution costs us—but these are not our only communications from England. My health is materially better. My spirits, not the most brilliant in the world; but that we attribute to our solitary situation, and, though happy, how should I be lively? We see something of Italian society indeed. The Romans please me much, especially the women, who, though totally devoid of every kind of information, or culture of the imagination, or affections, or understanding—and, in this respect, a kind of gentle savages—yet contrive to be interesting. Their extreme innocence and *naïveté*, the freedom and gentleness of their manners; the total absence of affectation, makes an intercourse with them very like an intercourse with uncorrupted children, whom they resemble in loveliness as well as simplicity. I have seen two women in society here of the highest beauty; their brows and lips, and the moulding of the face modelled with sculptural exactness, and the dark luxuriance of their hair floating over their fine complexions—and the lips—you must hear the commonplaces which escape from them, before they cease to be dangerous. The only inferior part are the eyes, which, though good and gentle, want the mazy depth of colour behind colour, with which the intellectual women of England and Germany entangle the heart in soul-inwoven labyrinths.

This is holy week, and Rome is quite full. The Emperor of Austria is here, and Maria Louisa is coming. On their journey through the other cities of Italy, she was greeted with loud acclamations, and vivas of Napoleon. Idiots and slaves! Like the frogs in the fable, because they are discontented with the log, they call upon the stork, who devours them. Great festas, and

magnificent funzioni here—we cannot get tickets to all. There are five thousand strangers in Rome, and only room for five hundred at the celebration of the famous Miserere, in the Sixtine chapel, the only thing I regret we shall not be present at. After all, Rome is eternal, and were all that *is* extinguished, that which *has been*, the ruins and the sculptures, would remain, and Raphael and Guido be alone regretted.

In the square of St. Peter's there are about three hundred fettered criminals at work, hoeing out the weeds that grow between the stones of the pavement. Their legs are heavily ironed, and some are chained two by two. They sit in long rows, hoeing out the weeds, dressed in parti-coloured clothes. Near them sit or saunter groups of soldiers, armed with loaded muskets. The iron discord of those innumerable chains clanks up into the sonorous air, and produces, contrasted with the musical dashing of the fountains, and the deep azure beauty of the sky, and the magnificence of the architecture around, a conflict of sensations allied to madness. It is the emblem of Italy—moral degradation contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts.

We see no English society here; it is not probable that we could if we desired it, and I am certain that we should find it insupportable. The manners of the rich English are wholly insupportable, and they assume pretensions which they would not venture upon in their own country. I am yet ignorant of the event of Hobhouse's election. I saw the last numbers were—Lamb, 4,200; and Hobhouse, 3,900—14th day. There is little hope. That mischievous Cobbett has divided and weakened the interest of the popular party, so that the factions that prey upon our country have been able to coalesce to its exclusion. The N—s<sup>1</sup> you have not seen. I am curious to know what kind of a girl Octavia becomes; she promised well. Tell H—his Melpomene is in the Vatican, and that her attitude and drapery surpass, if possible, the graces of her countenance.

<sup>1</sup> Newtons.

My *Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts. By the by, have you seen Ollier? I never hear from him, and am ignorant whether some verses I sent him from Naples, entitled, I think, *Lines on the Euganean Hills*, have reached him in safety or not. As to the Reviews, I suppose there is nothing but abuse; and this is not hearty or sincere enough to amuse me. As to the poem now printing,<sup>1</sup> I lay no stress on it one way or the other. The concluding lines are natural.

I believe, my dear Peacock, that you wish us to come back to England. How is it possible? Health, competence, tranquillity—all these Italy permits, and England takes away. I am regarded by all who know or hear of me, except, I think, on the whole, five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect. This is a large computation, and I don't think I could mention more than three. Such is the spirit of the English abroad as well as at home.<sup>2</sup>

Few compensate, indeed, for all the rest, and if I were *alone* I should laugh; or if I were rich enough to

<sup>1</sup> *Rosalind and Helen.*

<sup>2</sup> These expressions show how keenly Shelley felt the calumnies heaped on him during his life. The very exaggeration of which he is guilty, is a clue to much of his despondency. His seclusion from society resulted greatly from his extreme ill-health, and his dislike of strangers and numbers, as well as the system of domestic economy which his lavish benevolence forced us to restrict within narrow bounds. In justice to our countrymen, I must mention that several distinguished for intellectual eminence, among them, Frederic Earl of Guildford and Sir William Drummond, called on him at Rome. Accident at the time prevented him from cultivating their acquaintance—the death of our son, and our subsequent retirement at Pisa, shut us out still more from the world. I confess that the insolence of some of the more vulgar among the travelling English, rendered me anxious that Shelley should be more willing to extend his acquaintance among the better sort, but his health was an insuperable bar. [M. S.]

do all things, which I shall never be. Pity me for my absence from those social enjoyments which England might afford me, and which I know so well how to appreciate. Still, I shall return some fine morning, out of pure weakness of heart.

My dear Peacock, most faithfully yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 20

*Rome, June 8th, 1819.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.

If the things Mary desired to be sent to Naples have not been shipped, send them to Livorno.

We leave this city for Livorno to-morrow morning where we have written to take lodgings for a month. I will then write again.

Yours ever affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 21

*Livorno, June—<sup>1</sup>, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Our melancholy journey finishes at this town, but we retrace our steps to Florence, where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months. O that I could return to England ! How heavy a weight when misfortune is

<sup>1</sup> 20th or 21st, the London postmark being July 6th. [T.L.P.]

added to exile, and solitude, as if the measure were not full, heaped high on both. O that I could return to England! I hear you say, 'Desire never fails to generate capacity.' Ah, but that ever-present Malthus, Necessity, has convinced Desire that even though it generated capacity, its offspring must starve. Enough of melancholy! *Nightmare Abbey*, though no cure, is a palliative. I have just received the parcel which contained it, and at the same time the *Examiners*, by the way of Malta. I am delighted with *Nightmare Abbey*. I think Scythrop a character admirably conceived and executed; and I know not how to praise sufficiently the lightness, chastity, and strength of the language of the whole. It perhaps exceeds all your works in this. The catastrophe is excellent. I suppose the moral is contained in what Falstaff says—'For God's sake, talk like a man of this world'; and yet, looking deeper into it, is not the misdirected enthusiasm of Scythrop what J. C. calls the 'salt of the earth'? My friends the Gisbornes here admire and delight in it exceedingly. I think I told you that they (especially the lady) are people of high cultivation. She is a woman of profound accomplishments and the most refined taste.

Cobbett still more and more delights me, with all my horror of the sanguinary commonplaces of his creed. His design to overthrow bank notes by forgery is very comic. One of the volumes of Birkbeck interested me exceedingly. The letters I think stupid, but suppose that they are useful.

I do not, as usual, give you an account of my journey, for I had neither the health nor the spirit to take notes. My health was greatly improving, when watching and anxiety cast me into a relapse. The doctors (I put little faith in the best) tell me I must spend the winter in Africa or Spain. I shall of course prefer the latter, if I choose either.

Are you married, or why do I not hear from you? That were a good reason.

Mary and Claire unite with me in kindest remem-

brances to you, and in congratulations, if she exist, to the new married lady.

When shall I see you again?

Ever most faithfully yours, P. B. S.

Pray do not forget Mary's things.

I have not heard from you since the middle of April.

LETTER 22

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

*Livorno, July 6, 1819.*

I have lost some letters, and, in all probability, at least one from you, as I can account in no other manner for not having heard from you since your letter dated March 26th . . . We have changed our design of going to Florence immediately, and are now established for three months in a little country house in a pretty verdant scene near Livorno.

I have a study here in a tower, something like Scythrop's, where I am just beginning to recover the faculties of reading and writing. My health, whenever no Libeccio blows, improves. From my tower I see the sea, with its islands, Gorgona, Capraja, Elba, and Corsica, on one side, and the Apennines on the other. Milly surprised us the other day by first discovering a comet, on which we have been speculating. She may 'make a stir, like a great astronomer'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eyes of some men travel far  
For the finding of a star :  
Up and down the heavens they go,  
Men that make \* a mighty rout :  
I'm as great as they, I trow,  
Since the day I found thee out,  
Little flower ! I'll make a stir,  
Like a great astronomer.

WORDSWORTH.—*To the Little Celandine.*

This little flower has a very starry aspect. It is not properly a *Chelidonium*, and will not be found with that name in modern botanical works.

\* Wordsworth wrote 'keep'. The lines occur in the earlier poem of 1807, *To the Small Celandine*.

The direct purpose of this letter, however, is to ask you about the box which I requested you to send to me to Naples. If it has been sent, let me entreat you (for really it is of the most serious consequence to us) to write to me by return of post, stating the name of the ship, the bill of lading, &c., so that I may get it without difficulty. If it has not been sent, do me the favour to send it instantly, direct to Livorno. If you have not the time, you can ask Hogg. If you cannot get the things from Mrs. Hunt (a possible case), send those you were to buy, and the things from Furnival<sup>1</sup>, alone. You can add what books you think fit. The last parcel I have received from you is that of last September.

All good wishes, and many hopes that you have already that success on which there will be no congratulations more cordial than those you will receive from me.

Ever most sincerely yours,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

I shall receive your letter, if written by return of post, in thirty days: a distance less formidable than Rome or Naples.

The *Chelidonium majus*—Celandine: Swallowwort—blossoms from April to October. It is supposed to begin and end blooming with the arrival and departure of the swallow. It belongs to the class Poliantria monogynia, and to the natural order of Papaveraceae.

*Chelidonium minus*—Little Celandine—is an obsolete name for the *Ficaria ranunculoides*: Pilewort. It blossoms from the end of February to the end of April. It is so far connected with the arrival of the swallow, that it ceases to blossom when the swallowwort begins. This probably was the reason for its being called celandine, though the plants have nothing in common. But I think, in honour of Wordsworth, its old name should not have been entirely banished from botanical nomenclature. It might have been left, in Homeric phraseology, as the flower which men call Pilewort and Gods call Celandine. Its French name is *La Petite Chélidoine*. It belongs to the class Polyandria polygynia, and the natural order of Ranunculaceae. [T. L. P.]

<sup>1</sup> A surgeon at Egham, in whom Shelley had great confidence.  
[T. L. P.]

## LETTER 23

*Livorno, July, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We still remain, and shall remain nearly two months longer, at Livorno. Our house is a melancholy one,<sup>1</sup> and only cheered by letters from England. I got your note, in which you speak of three letters having been sent to Naples, which I have written for. I have heard also from H—,<sup>2</sup> who confirms the news of your success, an intelligence most grateful to me.

The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy, on the subject of a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters, as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian manuscript on which my play is founded, the chief subject of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt, as to whether it would succeed as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question, as to whether such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection: considering, first, that the facts are matter of history; and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.

I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present, founding my hopes on this, that, as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been

<sup>1</sup> We had lost our eldest, and at that time, only child, the preceding month at Rome. [M. S.]

<sup>2</sup> Hunt

acted, with the exception of *Remorse*; that the interest of its plot is incredibly greater and more real; and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you, that whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential, to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

What I want you to do is, to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neill, and it might even seem written for her (God forbid that I should ever see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces), and, in all respects, it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character, I confess, I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play—that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor. I think you know some of the people of that theatre, or, at least, some one who knows them; and when you have read the play, you may say enough, perhaps, to induce them not to reject it without consideration—but of this, perhaps, if I may judge from the tragedies which they have accepted, there is no danger at any rate.

Write to me as soon as you can on this subject, because it is necessary that I should present it, or, if rejected by the theatre, print it this coming season; lest somebody else should get hold of it, as the story, which now exists only in manuscript, begins to be generally known among the English. The translation which I send you is to be prefixed to the play, together with a print of Beatrice. I have a copy of her picture by Guido, now in the Colonna palace at Rome—the most beautiful creature you can conceive.

Of course, you will not show the manuscript to any one—and write to me by return of post, at which time the play will be ready to be sent.

I expect soon to write again, and it shall be a less selfish letter. As to Ollier, I don't know what has been published, or what has arrived at his hands. My *Prometheus*, though ready, I do not send till I know more.

Ever yours, most faithfully,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 24

*Livorno, August (probably 22nd), 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I ought first to say, that I have not yet received one of your letters from Naples; in Italy such things are difficult; but your present letter tells me all that I could desire to hear of your situation.

My employments are these: I awaken usually at seven; read half an hour; then get up; breakfast; after breakfast ascend *my tower*, and read or write until two. Then we dine. After dinner I read Dante with Mary, gossip a little, eat grapes and figs, sometimes walk, though seldom, and at half-past five pay a visit to Mrs. Gisborne, who reads Spanish with me until near seven. We then come for Mary, and stroll about till supper time. Mrs. Gisborne is a sufficiently amiable and very accomplished woman; she is *δημοκρατικη* and *αθηη*—how far she may be *φιλανθρωπη* I don't know, for she is the antipodes of enthusiasm. Her husband, a man with little thin lips, receding forehead, and a prodigious nose, is an [ ] bore. His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian—it weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of nose which transforms all the g's its wearer utters into k's. It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires the utmost stretch of Christian charity to forgive. I, you know, have a little turn-up nose; Hogg has a large hook one; but add them both together, square them, cube them, you will have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer.

I most devoutly wish I were living near London. I do not think I shall settle so far off as Richmond; and to inhabit any intermediate spot on the Thames would be to expose myself to the river damps; not to mention that it is not much to my taste. My inclinations point to Hampstead; but I do not know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious and ever-beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the alpha and the omega of existence. All that I see in Italy—and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine half enclosing the plain—is nothing; it dwindles into smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour. How we prize what we despised when present! So the ghosts of our dead associations rise and haunt us, in revenge for our having let them starve, and abandoned them to perish.

You don't tell me if you see the Boinvilles; nor are they included in the list of the *conviti* at the monthly symposium. I will attend it in imagination.

One thing, I own, I am curious about; and in the chance of the letters not coming from Naples, pray tell me. What is it you do at the India House? Hunt writes, and says you have got a *situation* in the India House: Hogg, that you have an *honourable employment*: Godwin writes to Mary that you have got *so much or so much*: but nothing of what you do. The devil take these general terms. Not content with having driven all poetry out of the world, at length they make war on their own allies; nay, on their very parents, dry facts. If it had not been the age of generalities, any one of these people would have told me what you did.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I did my best to satisfy his curiosity on this subject; but it was in letters to Naples, which he had left before they arrived, and he never received them. I observed that this was the case

I have been much better these last three weeks. My work on the *Cenci*, which was done in two months, was a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept up, I think, the pain in my side, as sticks do a fire. Since then, I have materially improved. I do not walk enough. Clare, who is sometimes my companion, does not dress in exactly the right time. I have no stimulus to walk. Now, I go sometimes to Livorno on business; and that does me good.

England seems to be in a very disturbed state, if we may judge from some Paris papers. I suspect it is rather exaggerated; but when I hear them talk of paying in gold—nay I dare say take steps towards it, confess that the sinking fund is a fraud, &c., I no longer wonder. But the change should commence among the higher orders, or anarchy will only be the last flash before despotism.

I have been reading Calderon in Spanish. A kind of Shakespeare is this Calderon; and I have some thoughts, if I find that I cannot do anything better, of translating some of his plays.

The *Examiners* I receive. Hunt, as a political writer, pleases me more and more. Adieu. Mary and Clare send their best remembrances.

Your most faithful friend,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray send me some books, and Clare would take it as a great favour if you would send her *music books*.

## LETTER 25

*Livorno, September 9th, 1819.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I send you the tragedy<sup>1</sup>, addressed to Stamford Street, fearing lest it might be inconvenient to receive such bulky packets at the India House. You will see with the greater portion of the letters which arrived at any town in Italy after he had left it. [T. L. P.]

<sup>1</sup> The *Cenci*.

that the subject has not been treated as you suggested, and why it was not susceptible of such treatment. In fact, it was then already printing when I received your letter, and it has been treated in such a manner that I do not see how the subject forms an objection. You know *Oedipus* is performed on the fastidious French stage,<sup>1</sup> a play much more broad than this. I confess I have some hopes, and some friends here persuade me that they are not unfounded.

Many thanks for your attention in sending the papers which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester.<sup>2</sup> These are, as it were, the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learnt with equal facility! Pray let me have the *earliest* political news which you consider of importance at this crisis.

Yours ever most faithfully,

P. B. S.

I send this to the India House, the tragedy to Stamford Street.

### LETTER 26

Leghorn, September 21st, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

You will have received a short letter sent with the tragedy, and the tragedy itself by this time. I am, you

<sup>1</sup> The *Oedipus* of Dryden and Lee was often performed in the last century; but never in my time. There is no subject of this class treated with such infinite skill and delicacy as in Alfieri's beautiful tragedy, *Mirra*. It was the character in which Madame Ristori achieved her great success in Paris; but she was prohibited from performing it in London. If the Covent Garden managers had accepted the *Cenci*, I doubt if the licenser would have permitted the performance. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> These papers doubtless gave an account of the Reform Meeting of August 16th, which was dispersed by government troops at the cost of half a dozen lives. The incident made a deep impression upon Shelley, who promptly wrote and sent off to Leigh Hunt his *Mask of Anarchy*.

may believe, anxious to hear what you think of it, and how the manager talks about it. I have printed in Italy 250 copies, because it costs, with all duties and freightage, about half what it would cost in London, and these copies will be sent by sea. My other reason was a belief that the seeing it in print would enable the people at the theatre to judge more easily. Since I last wrote to you, Mr. Gisborne is gone to England for the purpose of obtaining a situation for Henry Reveley.<sup>1</sup> I have given him a letter to you, and you would oblige me by showing what civilities you can, and by forwarding his views, either by advice or recommendation, as you may find opportunity, not for his sake, who is a great bore, but for the sake of Mrs. Gisborne and Henry Reveley, people for whom we have a great esteem. Henry is a most amiable person, and has great talents as a mechanic and engineer. I have given him also a letter to Hunt, so that you will meet him there. Mr. Gisborne is a man who knows I cannot tell how many languages, and has read almost all the books you can think of; but all that they contain seems to be to his mind what water is to a sieve. His liberal opinions are all the reflections of Mrs. G.'s, a very amiable, accomplished, and completely unprejudiced woman.

Charles Clairmont is now with us on his way to Vienna. He has spent a year or more in Spain, where he has learnt Spanish, and I make him read Spanish all day long. It is a most powerful and expressive language, and I have already learnt sufficient to read with great ease their poet Calderon. I have read about twelve of his plays. Some of them certainly deserve to be ranked among the grandest and most perfect productions of the human mind. He exceeds all modern dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, whom he resembles, however, in the depth of thought and subtlety of imagination of his writings, and in the rare power of interweaving delicate and powerful comic traits with the

<sup>1</sup> A son of Mrs. Gisborne by a former marriage. [T. L. P.]

most tragical situations, without diminishing their interest. I rate him far above Beaumont and Fletcher.

I have received all the papers you sent me, and the *Examiners* regularly, perfumed with muriatic acid. What an infernal business this of Manchester ! What is to be done ? Something assuredly. H. Hunt has behaved, I think, with great spirit and coolness in the whole affair.

I have sent you my *Prometheus*, which I do not wish to be sent to Ollier for publication until I write to that effect. Mr. Gisborne will bring it, as also some volumes of Spenser, and the two last of Herodotus and *Paradise Lost*, which may be put with the others.

If my play should be accepted, don't you think it would excite some interest, and take off the unexpected horror of the story, by showing that the events are real, if it could be made to appear in some paper in some form ?

You will hear from me again shortly, as I send you by sea the *Cencis* printed, which you will be good enough to keep. Adieu.

Yours most faithfully,

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 27

[Postmark, *Pisa, Mr. 25, 1820.*]

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have received your letter, and in a few days afterwards that of B—— and E—— and I enclose you theirs and my answer. . . . I have written to them a plain statement of the case, and a plain account of my situation. . . . I think by the interposition of your kind offices the affair may be arranged.

I see with deep regret in to-day's papers the attempt to assassinate the Ministry. Everything seems to conspire against Reform. How Cobbett must laugh at the 'resumption of gold payments'. I long to see him.

I have a motto on a ring in Italian 'Il buon tempo verrà'. There is a tide both in public and in private affairs, which awaits both men and nations.

I have no news from Italy. We live here under a nominal tyranny administered according to the philosophic laws of Leopold and the mild opinions which are the fashion here. . . . Tuscany is unlike all the other Italian States, in this respect.

## LETTER 28

*Pisa, May, 1820.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I congratulate you most sincerely on your choice and on your marriage. . . . I was very much amused by your laconic account of the affair. It is altogether extremely like the *dénouement* of one of your own novels, and as such serves to<sup>1</sup> a theory I once imagined, that in everything any man ever wrote, spoke, acted, or imagined, is contained, as it were, an allegorical idea of his own future life, as the acorn contains the oak.

But not to ascend in my balloon. I have written to Hogg to ask him to pay me a visit, and though I had no hope of success, I commissioned him to endeavour to bring *you*. This becomes still more improbable from your news; but I need not say that your amiable mountaineer would make you still more welcome. My friends the Gisbornes are now really on their way to London, where they propose to stay only six weeks. I think you will like Mrs. Gisborne. Henry is an excellent fellow, but not very communicative. If you find anything in the shape of dullness or otherwise to endure in Mr. Gisborne, endure it for the lady's sake and mine; but for Heaven's sake! do not let him know that I think him stupid. Indeed, perhaps I do him an injustice,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. B. F. inserts [support?]

<sup>2</sup> I think he did. I found Mr. Gisborne an agreeable and well-informed man. He and his amiable and accomplished wife

though certainly he proses. Hogg will find it very agreeable (if he postpones his visit so long, or if he visits me at all) to join them on their return. I wish you, and Hogg, and Hunt, and—I know not who besides—would come and spend some months with me together in this wonderful land.

We know little of England here. I take in Galignani's paper, which is filled with extracts from the *Courier*, and from those accounts it appears probable that there is but little unanimity in the mass of the people ; and that a civil war impends from the success of ministers, and the exasperation of the poor.

I see my tragedy has been republished in Paris ; if that is the case, it ought to sell in London ; but I hear nothing from Ollier.

I have suffered extremely this winter ; but I feel myself most materially better at the return of spring. I am on the whole greatly benefited by my residence in Italy, and but for certain moral causes should probably have been enabled to re-establish my system completely. Believe me, my dear Peacock, yours very sincerely,

P. B. S.

Pray make my best regards acceptable to your new companion.

#### LETTER 29

*Leghorn, July 12th, 1820.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I remember you said that when Auber married you were afraid you would see or hear but little of him. 'There are two voices,' says Wordsworth, 'one of the mountains and one of the sea, both a mighty voice.' So you have two wives—one of the mountains, all of whose claims I perfectly admit, whose displeasure I deprecate, and from whom I feel assured that I have nothing to fear : the other of the sea, the India House, have long been dead. I should not have printed what Shelley says of him if any person were living whom the remembrance could annoy. [T. L. P.]

who perhaps makes you write so much that I suppose you have not a scrawl to spare. I make bold to write to you on the news that you are correcting my *Prometheus*, for which I return thanks, and I send some things which may be added. I hear of you from Mr. Gisborne, but from you I do not hear. Well, how go on the funds and the Romance?<sup>1</sup> Cobbett's euthanasia seems approaching, and I suppose you will have some rough festivals at the apotheosis of the Debt.

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry. I, for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners every one would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues, should be turned into a heroine because she is a queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king; and he, no less than his ministers, are so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them, is admirable. The Paris paper, which I take in, copied some excellent remarks from the *Examiner* about it.

We are just now occupying the Gisbornes' house at Leghorn, and I have turned Mr. Reveley's workshop into my study. The Libecchio here howls like a chorus of fiends all day, and the weather is just pleasant,—not at all hot, the days being very misty, and the nights divinely serene. I have been reading with much pleasure the Greek romances. The best of them is the pastoral of Longus: but they are all very entertaining, and would be delightful if they were less rhetorical and ornate. I am translating in *ottava rima* the *Hymn to*

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Peacock's *Maid Marian*.

*Mercury* of Homer. Of course my stanza precludes a literal translation. My next effort will be, that it should be legible—a quality much to be desired in translations.

I am told that the magazines, &c., blaspheme me at a great rate. I wonder why I write verses, for nobody reads them. It is a kind of disorder, for which the regular practitioners prescribe what is called a torrent of abuse ; but I fear that can hardly be considered as a specific. . . .

I enclose two additional poems, to be added to those printed at the end of *Prometheus* : and I send them to you, for fear Ollier might not know what to do in case he objected to some expressions in the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas ;<sup>1</sup> and that you would do me the favour to insert an asterisk, or asterisks, with as little expense of the sense as may be. The other poem I send to you, not to make two letters. I want Jones's *Greek Grammar* very much for Mary, who is deep in Greek. I thought of sending for it in sheets by the post ; but as I find it would cost as much as a parcel, I would rather have a parcel, including it and some other books, which you would do me a great favour by sending by the first ship. Never send us more reviews than two back on any of Lord Byron's works, as we get them here. Ask Ollier, Mr. Gisborne, and Hunt whether they have anything to send.

Believe me, my dear Peacock,  
Sincerely and affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

Jones's *Greek Grammar* ; Schrevelii *Lexicon* ; *The Greek Exercises* ; *Melincourt*, and *Headlong Hall* ; papers, and *Indicators*, and whatever else you may think interesting. Godwin's *Answer to Malthus*, if out. Six copies of the second edition of *Cenci*.

<sup>1</sup> These were the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas of the *Ode to Liberty*. [T. L. P.]

## LETTER 30

*Pisa, November (probably 8th), 1820.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I also delayed to answer your last letter, because I was waiting for something to say : or at least, something that should be likely to be interesting to you. The box containing my books, and consequently your Essay against the cultivation of poetry, has not arrived ; my wonder, meanwhile, in what manner you support such a heresy in this matter of fact and money-loving age, holds me in suspense. Thank you for your kindness in correcting *Prometheus*, which I am afraid gave you a great deal of trouble. Among the modern things which have reached me is a volume of poems by Keats : in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called *Hyperion*. I dare say you have not time to read it ; but it is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before.

I hear from Mr. Gisborne that you are surrounded with statements and accounts,—a chaos of which you are the God ; a sepulchre which encloses in a dormant state the chrysalis of the Pavonian Psyche. May you start into life some day, and give us another *Melincourt*. Your *Melincourt* is exceedingly admired, and I think much more so than any of your other writings. In this respect the world judges rightly. There is more of the true spirit, and an object less indefinite, than in either *Headlong Hall* or *Scythrop*.

I am, speaking literally, infirm of purpose. I have great designs, and feeble hopes of ever accomplishing them. I read books, and, though I am ignorant enough, they seem to teach me nothing. To be sure, the reception the public have given me might go far enough to damp any man's enthusiasm. They teach you, it may be said, only what is true. Very true, I doubt not, and the more true the less agreeable. I can compare my

experience in this respect to nothing but a series of wet blankets. I have been reading nothing but Greek and Spanish. Plato and Calderon have been my gods. We are now in the town of Pisa. A schoolfellow of mine from India<sup>1</sup> is staying with me, and we are beginning Arabic together. Mary is writing a novel,<sup>2</sup> illustrative of the manners of the Middle Ages in Italy, which she has raked out of fifty old books. I promise myself success from it ; and certainly, if what is wholly original will succeed, I shall not be disappointed. . . .

Adieu. *In publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone.*  
Ever faithfully yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 31

*Pisa, February 15th, 1821.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

The last letter I received from you, nearly four months from the date thereof, reached me by the boxes which the Gisbornes sent by sea. I am happy to learn that you continue in good external and internal preservation. I received at the same time your printed denunciations against general, and your written ones against particular poetry ; and I agree with you as decidedly in the latter as I differ in the former. The man whose critical gall is not stirred up by such *ottava rimas* as Barry Cornwall's, may safely be conjectured to possess no gall at all. The world is pale with the sickness of such stuff. At the same time, your anathemas against poetry itself excited me to a sacred rage, or *caloëthes*<sup>3</sup> *scribendi* of vindicating the insulted Muses. I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you, within the lists of a magazine, in honour of my mistress Urania ; but God willed that I should be too

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Medwin. <sup>2</sup> *Valperga.*

<sup>3</sup> Peacock printed *cacoëthes* for *caloëthes*, apparently not perceiving Shelley's joke. It is certainly *caloëthes* in the letter. [H. B. F.]

lazy, and wrested the victory from your hope : since first having unhorsed poetry, and the universal sense of the wisest in all ages, an easy conquest would have remained to you in me, the knight of the shield of shadow and the lance of gossamere. Besides, I was at that moment reading Plato's *Ion*, which I recommend you to reconsider. Perhaps in the comparison of Platonic and Malthusian doctrines, the *mavis errare* of Cicero is a justifiable argument ; but I have a whole quiver of arguments on such a subject.

Have you seen Godwin's answer to the apostle of the rich ?<sup>1</sup> And what do you think of it ? It has not yet reached me, nor has your box, of which I am in daily expectation.

We are now in the crisis and point of expectation in Italy. The Neapolitan and Austrian armies are rapidly approaching each other, and every day the news of a battle may be expected. The former have advanced into the Ecclesiastical States, and taken hostages from Rome to assure themselves of the neutrality of that power, and appear determined to try their strength in open battle. I need not tell you how little chance there is that the new and undisciplined levies of Naples should stand against a superior force of veteran troops. But the birth of liberty in nations abounds in examples of a reversal of the ordinary laws of calculation : the defeat of the Austrians would be the signal of insurrection throughout all Italy.

I am devising literary plans of some magnitude. But nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers ; and if my play of the *Cenci* found none or few, I despair of ever producing anything that shall merit them.

Among your anathemas of the modern attempts in poetry, do you include Keats's *Hyperion* ? I think it very fine. His other poems are worth little ; but if the *Hyperion* be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries.

<sup>1</sup> Godwin's treatise *Of Population*, in answer to Malthus.

I suppose *you* are writing nothing but Indian laws, &c. I have but a faint idea of your occupation; but I suppose it has much to do with pen and ink.

Mary desires to be kindly remembered to you; and I remain, my dear Peacock, yours very faithfully,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 32

*Pisa, March 21st, 1821.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I dispatch by this post the first part of an essay intended to consist of three parts, which I design for an antidote to your *Four Ages of Poetry*.<sup>1</sup> You will see that I have taken a more general view of what is poetry than you have, and will perhaps agree with several of my positions, without considering your own touched. But read and judge; and do not let us imitate the great founders of the picturesque, Price and Payne Knight, who, like two ill-trained beagles, began snarling at each other when they could not catch the hare.

I hear the welcome news of a box from England announced by Mr. Gisborne. How much new poetry does it contain? The Bavii and Maevii of the day are very fertile; and I wish those who honour me with boxes

<sup>1</sup> The *Four Ages of Poetry* here alluded to was published in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany*. Shelley wrote the *Defence of Poetry* as an answer to it; and as he wrote it, it contained many allusions to the article and its author, such as 'If I know the knight by the device of his shield, I have only to inscribe Cassandra, Antigone, or Alcestis on mine to blunt the point of his spear'; taking one instance of a favourite character from each of the three great Greek tragedians. All these allusions were struck out by Mr. John Hunt when he prepared the paper for publication in the *Liberal*. The demise of that periodical prevented the publication, and Mrs. Shelley subsequently printed it from Mr. Hunt's *rifacimento*, as she received it. The paper as it now stands is a defence without an attack. Shelley intended this paper to be in three parts, but the other two were not written. [T. L. P.]

would read and inwardly digest your *Four Ages of Poetry*; for I had much rather, for my own private reading, receive political, geological, and moral treatises, than this stuff in *terza, ottava*, and *tremillesima rima* whose earthly baseness has attracted the lightning of your undiscriminating censure upon the temple of immortal song. Procter's verses enrage me far more than those of Codrus did Juvenal, and with better reason. Juvenal need not have been stunned unless he had liked it; but my boxes are packed with this trash, to the exclusion of what I want to see. But your box will make amends.

Do you see much of Hogg now? and the Boinvilles and Colson? Hunt I suppose not. And are you occupied as much as ever? We are surrounded here in Pisa by revolutionary volcanoes, which, as yet, give more light than heat: the lava has not yet reached Tuscany. But the news in the papers will tell you far more than it is prudent for me to say; and for this once I will observe your rule of political silence. The Austrians wish that the Neapolitans and Piedmontese would do the same.

We have seen a few more people than usual this winter, and have made a very interesting acquaintance with a Greek Prince, perfectly acquainted with ancient literature, and full of enthusiasm for the liberties and improvement of his country. Mary has been a Greek student for several months, and is reading *Antigone* with our turbaned friend, who, in return, is taught English. Claire has passed the carnival at Florence, and has been preternaturally gay. I have had a severe ophthalmia, and have read or written little this winter; and have made acquaintance in an obscure convent with the only Italian for whom I ever felt any interest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lady Emilia Viviani, the subject of his *Epipsychedion*. She was the daughter of an Italian Count, who shut her up in a convent till he could find for her a husband to his own taste. It was there Shelley became acquainted with her. He was struck by the beauty of her person, the graces of her mind, the misery

I want you to do something for me: that is, to get me two pounds' worth of Tassi's gems, in Leicester Square, the prettiest, according to your taste; among them, the head of Alexander; and to get me two seals engraved and set, one smaller, and the other handsomer; the device a dove with outspread wings, and this motto round it:

Máντις εἰμὶ ἐσθλῶν ἀγώνων.

Mary desires her best regards<sup>1</sup>; and I remain, my dear Peacock, ever most sincerely yours,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 33

*Ravenna, August (probably 10th), 1821.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I received your last letter just as I was setting off from the Bagni on a visit to Lord Byron at this place. of her imprisonment in dismal society. He took for the motto of his poem her own words, *L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell' infinito un mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.* 'She was subsequently married to a gentleman chosen for her by her father, and after pining in his society, and in the marshy solitudes of the Maremma, for six years, she left him, with the consent of her parent, and died of consumption, in a dilapidated old mansion at Florence.' (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 149.) Though she was not killed by her husband, her fate always recalls to me the verses of Dante:

Ricordati di me, che son la Pia :  
 Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma  
 Salsi colui che innanellata pria  
 Disposando m'avea con la sua gemma.

*Purgatorio*, v. 133-6. [T. L. P.]

<sup>1</sup> There is a postscript from Mrs. Shelley, asking me to execute one or two small commissions, and adding:—

Am I not lucky to have got so good a master? I have finished the two plays of *Oedipus*, and am now reading the *Antigone*. The name of the prince is Αλέξανδρος Μαυροκόρδατος. He can read English perfectly well. [T. L. P.]

Many thanks for all your kind attention to my accursed affairs. . . .

I have sent you by the Gisbornes a copy of the *Elegy on Keats*. The subject, I know, will not please you ; but the composition of the poetry, and the taste in which it is written, I do not think bad. You and the enlightened public will judge. Lord Byron is in excellent cue both of health and spirits. He has got rid of all those melancholy and degrading habits which he indulged at Venice. He lives with one woman, a lady of rank here, to whom he is attached, and who is attached to him, and is in every respect an altered man. He has written three more cantos of *Don Juan*. I have yet only heard the fifth, and I think that every word of it is pregnant with immortality. I have not seen his late plays, except *Marino Faliero*, which is very well, but not so transcendently fine as *Don Juan*. Lord Byron gets up at two. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom (but one must sleep or die, like Southeby's sea-snake in *Kehama*), at twelve. After breakfast, we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea ; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I don't suppose this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer. Lord B.'s establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon ; and all these, except the horses, walk about the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels, as if they were the masters of it. Lord B. thinks you wrote a pamphlet signed *John Bull* ; he says he knew it by the style resembling *Melincourt*, of which he is a great admirer. I read it, and assured him that it could not possibly be yours.<sup>1</sup> I write nothing, and

<sup>1</sup> Most probably Shelley's partiality for me and my book put too favourable a construction on what Lord Byron may have said. Lord Byron told Captain Medwin that a friend of Shelley's had written a novel, of which he had forgotten the name, founded

probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing . . . and the accursed cause to the downfall of which I dedicated what powers I may have had—flourishes like a cedar and covers England with its boughs. My motive was never the infirm desire of fame ; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. This cup is justly given to one only of an age ; indeed, participation would make it worthless : and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not.

I congratulate you—I hope I ought to do so—on your expected stranger. He is introduced into a rough world. My regards to Hogg, and Colson if you see him.

Ever most faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

After I have sealed my letter, I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circaeian Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea-hens, and an Egyptian crane. I wonder who all these animals were, before they were changed into these shapes.

#### LETTER 34

*Pisa, January (probably 11th), 1822.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I am still at Pisa, where I have at length fitted up some rooms at the top of a lofty palace that overlooks

on his bear. He described it sufficiently to identify it, and Captain Medwin supplied the title in a note : but assuredly, when I condensed Lord Monboddo's views of the humanity of the Oran Outang into the character of *Sir Oran Haut-ton*, I thought neither of Lord Byron's bear nor of Caligula's horse. But Lord Byron was much in the habit of fancying that all the world was spinning on his pivot. As to the pamphlet signed John Bull, I certainly did not write it. I never even saw it, and do not know what it was about. [T. L. P.]

the city and the surrounding region, and have collected books and plants about me, and established myself for some indefinite time, which, if I read the future, will not be short. I wish you to send my books by the very first opportunity, and I expect in them a great augmentation of comfort. Lord Byron is established here, and we are constant companions. No small relief this, after the dreary solitude of the understanding and the imagination in which we past the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts.

Of course you have seen his last volume, and if you before thought him a great poet, what is your opinion now that you have read *Cain*! The *Foscarî* and *Sardanapalus* I have not seen; but as they are in the style of his later writings, I doubt not they are very fine. We expect Hunt here every day, and remain in great anxiety on account of the heavy gales which he must have encountered at Christmas.<sup>1</sup> Lord Byron has fitted up the lower apartments of his palace for him, and Hunt will be agreeably surprised to find a commodious lodging prepared for him after the fatigues and dangers of his passage. I have been long idle, and, as far as writing goes, despondent; but I am now engaged on *Charles the First*, and a devil of a nut it is to crack.

Mary and Clara (who is not with us just at present) are well, and so is our little boy, the image of poor William. We live as usual, tranquilly. I get up, or at least wake

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hunt and his family were to have embarked for Italy in September, 1821; but the vessel was delayed till the 16th of November. They were detained three weeks by bad weather at Ramsgate, and were beaten up and down channel till the 22nd of December, when they put in at Dartmouth. Mrs. Hunt being too ill to proceed, they went to Plymouth, resumed their voyage in another vessel on the 13th of May, 1822, and arrived at Leghorn about the end of June, having been nine months from the time of their engagement with the first vessel in finding their way to Italy. In the present days of railways and steam navigation, this reads like a modern version of the return of Ulysses. [T. L. P.]

early ; read and write till two ; dine ; go to Lord B.'s, and ride, or play billiards, as the weather permits ; and sacrifice the evening either to light books or whoever happens to drop in. Our furniture, which is very neat, cost fewer shillings than that at Marlow did pounds sterling ; and our windows are full of plants, which turn the sunny winter into spring. My health is better—my cares are lighter ; and although nothing will cure the consumption of my purse, yet it drags on a sort of life in death, very like its master, and seems, like Fortunatus's, always empty yet never quite exhausted. You will have seen my *Adonais* and perhaps my *Hellas*, and I think, whatever you may judge of the subject, the composition of the first poem will not wholly displease you. I wish I had something better to do than furnish this jingling food for the hunger of oblivion, called verse, but I have not ; and since you give me no encouragement about India<sup>1</sup> I cannot hope to have.

How is your little star, and the heaven which contains the milky way in which it glimmers ?

Adieu.—Yours ever, most truly,  
S.

[The following extract, which forms the conclusion of a letter to him from Mrs. Shelley, was printed by Peacock at the end of Shelley's letters. It was dated,]

*Genoa, Sept 29th, 1822.*

I have written you a letter entirely about business. When I hold my pen in my hand, my natural impulse is to express the feelings that overwhelm me ; but resisting that impulse, I dare not for a moment stray from my subject, or I should never find it again. . . . Alas, find in the whole world so transcendent a being as mine own Shelley, and then tell me to be consoled ! And it

<sup>1</sup> He had expressed a desire to be employed politically at the court of a native prince, and I had told him that such employment was restricted to the regular service of the East India Company. [T. L. P.]

is not he alone I have lost, though that misery, swallowing up all others, has hitherto made me forgetful of all others. My best friend, my dear Edward,<sup>1</sup> whom next to S. I loved, and whose virtues were worthy of the warmest affection, he too is gone! Jane (i.e. Mrs. Williams), driven by her cruel fate to England, has also deserted me. What have I left? Not one that can console me; not one that does not show by comparison how deep and irremediable my losses are. Trelawny is the only quite disinterested friend I have here—the only one who clings to the memory of my loved ones as I do myself; but he, alas, is not as one of them, though he is really good and kind. Adieu, my dear Peacock; be happy with your wife and child. I hear that the first is deserving of every happiness, and the second a most interesting little creature. I am glad to hear this. Desolate as I am, I cling to the idea that some of my friends at least are not like me. Again, adieu.

Your attached friend,  
MARY W. SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> Captain Williams, who was drowned with Shelley. [T. L. P.]

## APPENDIX I

### STANZAS

#### WRITTEN IN MY POCKET COPY OF THOMSON'S CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.<sup>1</sup>

WITHIN our happy Castle there dwelt One  
Whom without blame I may not overlook ;  
For never sun on living creature shone  
Who more devout enjoyment with us took :  
Here on his hours he hung as on a book,  
On his own time here would he float away,  
As doth a fly upon a summer brook ;  
But go to-morrow, or belike to-day,  
Seek for him,—he is fled ; and whither none can say.

Thus often would he leave our peaceful home,  
And find elsewhere his business or delight ;  
Out of our Valley's limits did he roam :  
Full many a time, upon a stormy night,  
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height :  
Oft could we see him<sup>2</sup> driving full in view  
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright ;  
What ill was on him, what he had to do,  
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah ! piteous sight it was to see this Man  
When he came back to us, a withered flower,—  
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.  
Down would he sit ; and without strength or power  
Look at the common grass from hour to hour ;

<sup>1</sup> See p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> 1836.

1815.      Oft did we see him . . . .

And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,  
When apple-trees in blossom made a bower,  
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay ;  
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was  
Whenever from our Valley he withdrew ;  
For happier soul no living creature has  
Than he had, being here the long day through.  
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo :  
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong ;  
But verse was what he had been wedded to ;  
And his own mind did like a tempest strong  
Come to him thus, and drove the weary Wight along.

With him there often walked in friendly guise,  
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,  
A noticeable Man with large grey eyes,  
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly  
As if a blooming face it ought to be ;  
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,  
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy ;  
Profound his forehead was, though not severe ;  
Yet some did think that he had little business here ;

There are three more stanzas in the poem, which was composed at Grasmere in 1802, and published in 1815. Wordsworth himself and Coleridge are the persons described ; but Shelley could not have known this at the time when he discussed the *Stanzas* with Peacock. The text given above is Wordsworth's own final *textus receptus*, as printed in Knight's Edinburgh edition of 1882.

## APPENDIX II

THE report of this meeting<sup>1</sup> fills near a column of the *Morning Post* of Nov. 22, 1859. The meeting is stated to have taken place 'last night', and the paper, which was read by 'Mr. Lewis, Q.C.', was followed by a discussion 'of more than ordinary interest'. Appended is a bare outline of the paper, condensed from this account.

The reader maintained the right of the state 'to protect the Christian religion from ribald and scurrilous attacks'. The state, he argued, is 'under a twofold obligation to do so—first, for the sake of protecting society from the public evil that would ensue, should the sanctions of that creed be weakened; and secondly, for the preservation of the law which is based upon it'. The *dicta* of various justices are quoted, and 'he gathered from them that the reason of the law making blasphemy an indictable offence was—first, that Christianity was part and parcel of the law; so that when Christianity was attacked, the law itself was attacked; secondly, because blasphemy endangered Government and society; thirdly, that it was prejudicial to morality; and fourthly, that it interfered with the due administration of justice, inasmuch as a denial of revealed religion implied a disbelief in a state of future rewards and punishments, the belief in which was the basis of the oath administered in the courts of justice.'

The reader proceeded to enumerate three classes as incurring liability, of which he would have the first include 'such cases as were matters of police'; for example, that of the publishers of Paine's *Age of Reason*. In the second class he placed 'foundations for unchristian

<sup>1</sup> See p. 64.

objects', instancing 'Lady Hudley's charity'; and 'the third class comprised all those in which the Court of Chancery, on the doctrine *Parrens patriae*, deprived the parent of the guardianship of his children when his principles were in antagonism to religion, as it did in the case of the poet Shelley.'





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